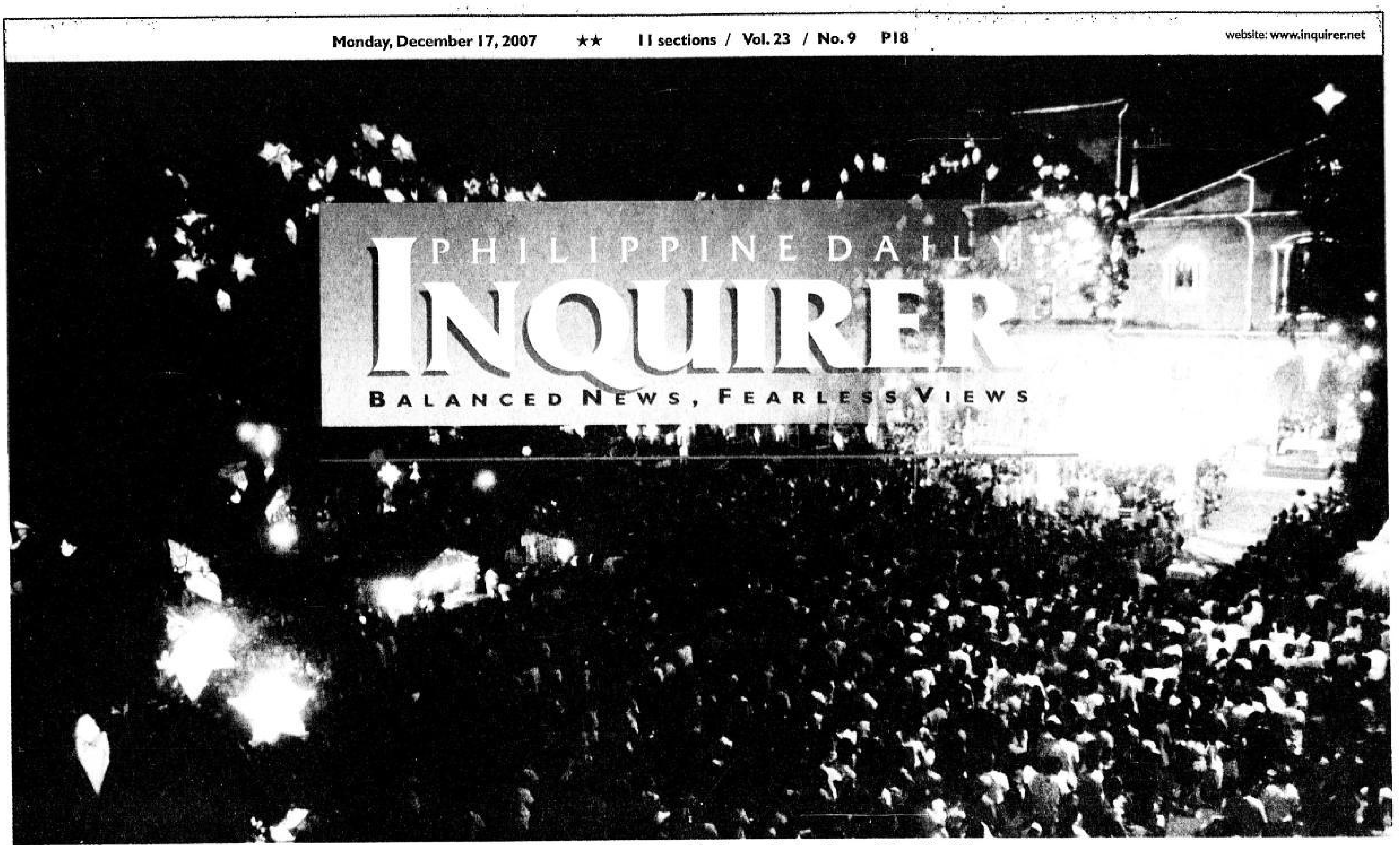
Monday, December 17, 2007 ★★ 11 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 9 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS



CHURCHGOERS attend the first of the nine-day dawn Masses on Sunday at the St. Joseph Church, site of the famous Bamboo Organ, in Las Piñas City. RYAN LIM

GMA thwarts Jalosjos

JALOSJOS: Rapist's case still under DOJ review.

Gonzalez: Rapist may be released only in '09

By Christine O. Avendaño and DJ Yap *in Manila,*
Bert Laput and Richel Umel
Inquirer Mindanao

JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT Saturday, bursts of fireworks exploded over Dapitan City in Zamboanga del Norte on news that one of its sons—Prisoner N98P-0748—was finally coming home.

Some 2,000 city residents gathered to hear a thanksgiving Mass or watch the fireworks display as news of the impending return of convicted child-rapist, former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos, spread through the city.

But it was a short-lived celebration.

Saying President Macapagal-Arroyo was "upset" at the news, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday ordered officials of the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City to keep the former lawmaker—convicted in 1997 of raping an 11-year-old girl and sentenced to two life terms—in jail.

GMA THWARTS/ A4

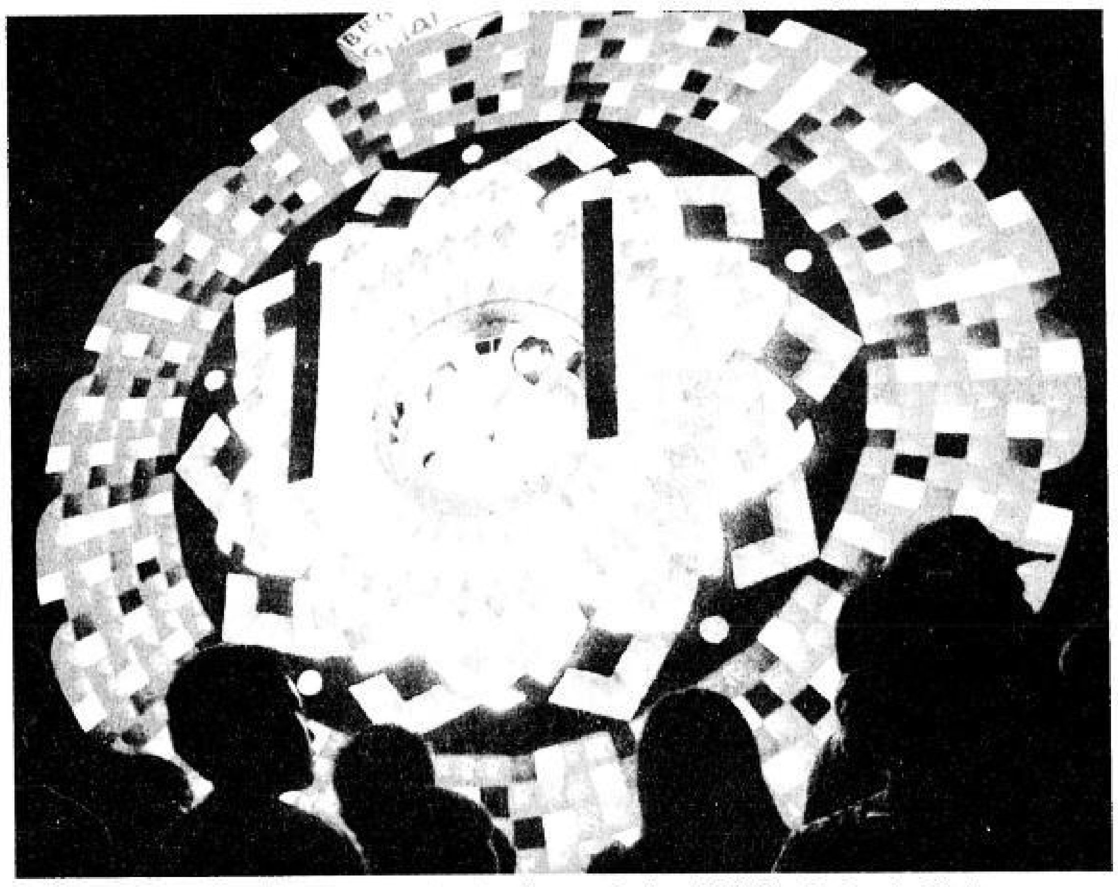
No rigging, says Transco bid winner

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MONTE ORO GRID RESOURCES yesterday said its successful $3.9-billion bid for the power grids of National Transmission Corp. (Transco) was fair and competitive, dismissing criticism that last week's auction was rigged to favor an influential ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Walter Brown, Monte Oro chair and president, said the main target of the conflict of interest criticism, businessman Enrique Razon, had kept his distance from

NO RIGGING/ A9



AGLITTER, AGLOW. Spectators watch a giant lantern's play with lights during the Christmas Lantern Festival in the City of San Fernando in Pampanga. REUTERS

Giant lanterns go 'dancing'

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Every year, Pampanga's giant Christmas lanterns light up the night sky and bring in the crowds.

During Saturday's *Ligligan Parul* (Lantern Festival), eight lanterns, each measuring 5.5 meters in diameter and fitted with 3,000 to 6,000 bulbs, danced for the first time in 20 years to the music of a brass band, a tradition being revived in this Pampanga capital.

The folk element was resurrected, courtesy of the city government's Magsilbi Tamu (Let's Serve) Brass Band 919.

The 45-member ensemble played under the baton of Edwin Lumanog, performing a medley of Christmas songs testing the sense of timing and rhythm of the lantern-makers and operators who showed off the designs and colors of their mammoth creations in the final round of the lantern competition.

Unlike in the early 1980s when the band played nonstop till morning, this time the band rendered a five-

GIANT/ A6

Anti-Red law won't stop insurgents

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo set the clock back 15 years when she endorsed on Dec. 13 a proposal by a Bicol congressman to revive the antediluvian Anti-Subversion Law.

Enacted in 1957 and repealed in 1992, the measure, she said, would be used as a weapon to stop the "ideological nonsense" and "criminal acts once and for all," and end the 39-year Philippine communist insurgency, so the country could "move on."

Fifty years spanned 1957 and 2007, during which the communist system collapsed in the

ANTI-RED/ A10

PDI story starts book donation

By Eliza Victoria
Inquirer Research

IT ALL STARTED WITH AN INQUIRER news article.

In June last year, American executive William M. Johnson donated money to buy books for the Diit-Mercyville Community School in Tacloban City.

He had read about how the school's 33 Grade 4 students did

PDI STORY/ A8

Top fashion designer found dead

By Niña Catherine Calleja and Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

PAGSANJAN, LAGUNA—ACclaimed fashion designer Ernest Santiago, who was found dead in his house here yesterday, may have been murdered by robbers, police said.

Santiago, 72, was found dead in his bed at around 9 a.m. by some of his employees at the 83 Gallery Café, a restaurant he owned near his house on Rizal Street in Barangay Poblacion II.

PO3 Benjamin Tapeño of the local police office said the victim

TOP FASHION/ A4

ERNEST Santiago is best remembered by people as the maverick behind Coco Banana, iconic club of the 1970s and 1980s. FILE PHOTO

Ernest helped define RP's lifestyle landscape

By Thelma San Juan
Contributor

ERNEST SANTIAGO, A LEADing fashion designer and landscape artist, lived alone in a beautiful Balinese-style home behind his café in Pagsanjan town in Laguna—a favorite destination of local and foreign tourists and the lifestyle crowd.

From the 1970s and even to this day, Ernest helped define the fashion, design and night life landscape of the Philippines. He was a lifestyle icon.

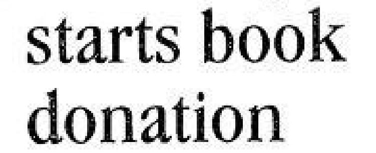
People remember him best as the maverick behind Coco Banana—the iconic club of the 1970s and 1980s immortalized in the Hotdog's Original Pilipino Music "Annie Batungbakal."

He opened Coco Banana in the mid-1970s, turned it into the "in" place for Manila's bohemians, café society, fashionistas and socialites. Indeed, it defined the after-six freedom of the city populace in the peak years of martial rule.

From disco music to live theatrical performances to outrageous fashion, Coco Banana dictated Manila's night life for over a decade.

Also in the 1970s and early 1980s, Ernest helped set fashion trends with the innovative,

ERNEST/ A4


SHOPPING BAG FASHIONISTA KA BA?

Top shops locked in battle of bags

NEW YORK—A TEAM OF DEsigners at Saks Fifth Avenue envisioned "a piece of modern art" and hired a renowned graphic artist to create it.

Their counterparts at Lord & Taylor demanded five prototypes, even traveling to a Korean factory to oversee manufacturing.

TOP SHOPS/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon, Visayas and Eastern Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rains. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	**Cagayan de Oro**	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY: RHEA BLANCAS, PDI RESEARCH/12/17/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

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Second FrontPage

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WAG LANG SANA MAG-BANATAN ULI. KAWAWA NAMAN KAMING MGA KALABAW!

EZ2

17 1

(In exact order)

Mid-Day **SUERTRES** Evening

2 0 3 | 2 3 6

SUPERLOTTO 6/49

2 25 29 31 42 48

₱22,926,776.40

WHAT'S INSIDE

207 OF 236 congressmen back English as instruction medium /A12

LUCIO TAN: One Marcos crony who flourished /A17

MILF calls off peace talks

Dispute over implementation snags negotiations with gov't in KL

By Jeoffrey Maitem
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—THE SCHEDULED EXPLORATORY talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Saturday did not push through after the MILF backed out of the meeting due to a dispute over a draft agreement on territorial boundaries.

The MILF rejected the inclusion by government negotiators of the phrase "constitutional process" in the proposed draft Memorandum of Agreement on ancestral domain as the mode for implementation of the agreement.

"They wanted the same constitutional process with the Moro National Liberation Front as the mode for the implementation. That's their position and we cannot accept it. We have yet to see the document," Eid Kabalu, MILF's civil-military affairs chief, told the INQUIRER by phone.

According to Kabalu, the MILF had informed the Malaysian facilitator that the draft of the government was unacceptable and, thus, resumption of the talks would not serve any purpose.

"There have been differences in the proposed text on concepts of territory and resources, including elements of governance," chief government negotiator Rodolfo Garcia told The Associated Press.

"Realistically given this present situation, it might be difficult to reach the (January) target. We are going to review the proposal that we have brought here and hope to be able to resolve the differences," he said.

Both sides hoped to get an agreement done in January on the "ancestral domain" agenda after years of wrangling.

Jesus Dureza, presidential adviser on the peace process, confirmed that the meeting in Kuala Lumpur "did not push through" in a text message to the INQUIRER.

"President Arroyo is determined to pursue a comprehensive settlement with the MILF, hence today's difficulties are surmountable," Dureza said in a statement.

Dureza said he would await the full report of the Philippine panel on what happened.

"For the moment, I am more aware that more discussions in the Cabinet will have to take place considering that some points in the government position have constitutional implications that need to be clarified to ensure successful implementation of agreements reached," Dureza said.

Under the Constitution, the exploration, utilization and development of natural resources shall be "under the full control" of the state.

"The MILF was disappointed with the draft because they accused the Philippine government of reneging on what had been agreed upon earlier," Othman Abdul Razak, the chief Malaysian government facilitator, told the AP.

"The meeting has to be called off because the MILF has refused to meet with the government panel," he said.

It is up to the government to improve the draft and make it acceptable to the MILF, he said.

Government and MILF negotiators were supposed to finalize the agreement on the territorial composition of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), the MILF's proposed homeland.

"Totally nothing happened yesterday. We have no idea what comes next, unless they could come up with compromise agreement today. We are optimistic. The ball is in the hands of government. We are ready always as long as they will not insist the Constitution in the talks," Kabalu said. *AP, AFP*

Top Abu, Janjalani's kin, killed

GOVERNMENT TROOPS KILLED A SENIOR Islamic militant wanted by the United States after they raided his safe house on a remote island in Mindanao, officials said on Sunday.

Abdulmibin Sakandal was killed when he engaged in a gunfight with a Navy and Marine contingent that attempted to capture him late Saturday in Bongao, Tawi Tawi, Philippine Navy spokesperson Lt. Col. Ariel Caculitan said.

"He was to be apprehended but he put up a fight," Caculitan said.

The US had offered $20,000 for the arrest of Sakandal, a brother-in-law of Abu Sayyaf chief Khadaffy Janjalani who was killed in a clash with the military on nearby Jolo island in September last year. The Philippine government had placed a separate P2 million bounty on his head.

Sakandal, also known as Mobin Abdurajak, a leader of the Abu Sayyaf group, was wanted for kidnapping 21 people, including Western tourists, from the Malaysian resort island of Sipadan in 2000. The victims were freed after a ransom was paid.

"The neutralization of Abdurajak is part of our campaign to eliminate the Abu Sayyaf terrorists," regional Navy chief Rear Admiral Emilio Marayag said. *Nikko Dizon, Reuters, AFP and AP*

Sumilao tillers see hope in GMA invitation

By TJ Burgonio

THE BUKIDNON FARMERS SCHEDULED to meet with President Macapagal-Arroyo today are optimistic the invitation is a "good sign" she would rule favorably on their bid to reclaim a 144-hectare property in Sumilao from a giant food firm.

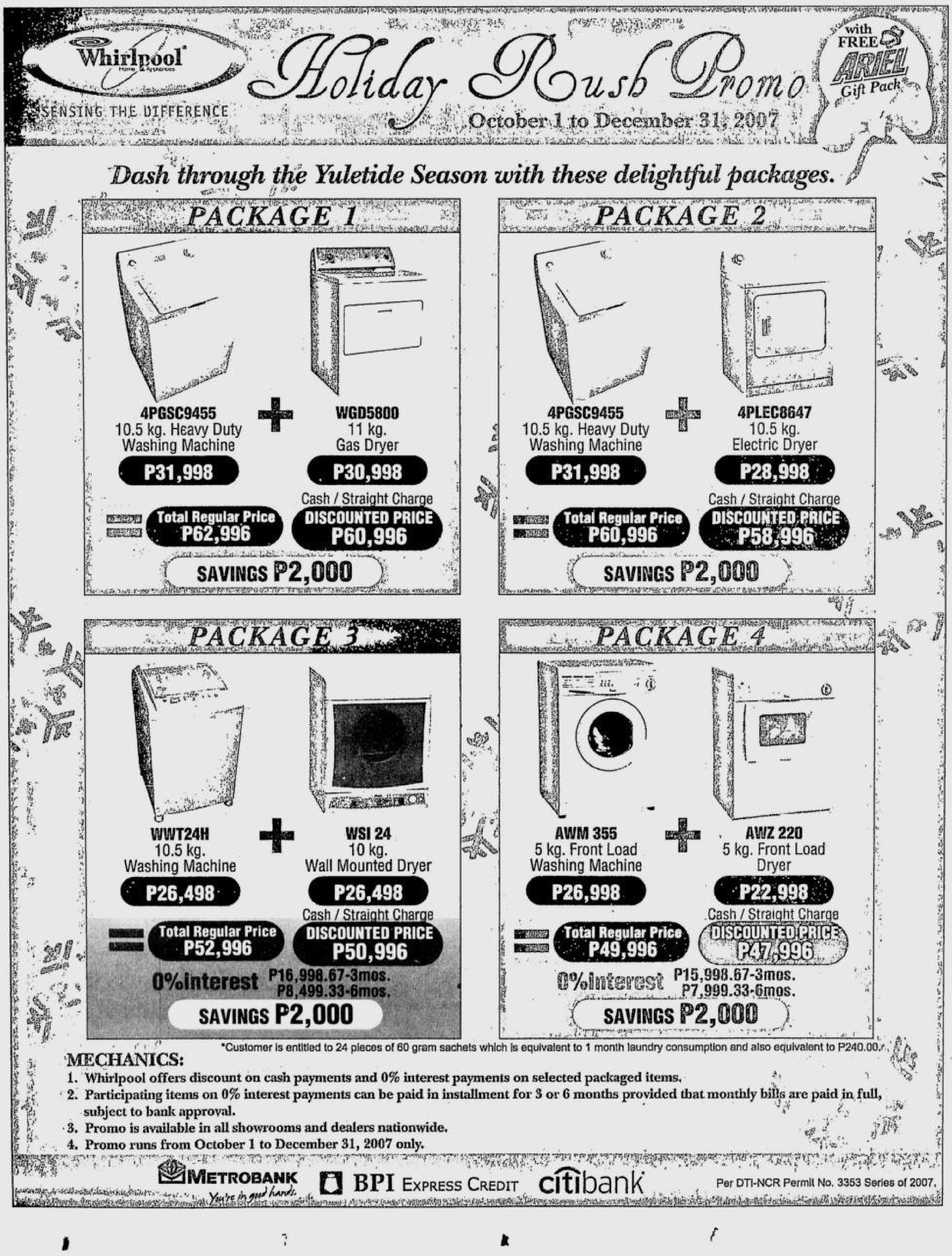
The 55 farmers, members of the indigenous Higaonon tribe, will march from their encampment outside the Department of Agrarian Reform office in Quezon City to Malacañang for the 11 a.m. dialogue with the President.

Later, the President will host lunch for 20 to 25 of the farmers' representatives and three or four Catholic bishops whom she agreed to meet with, Presidential Management Staff chief Cerge Remonde said yesterday.

"That's a good sign for us. We see this dialogue as an opportunity for her to prove that she supports agrarian reform. We expect her to issue a favorable decision," said Napoleon Merida Jr., 24, head of the San Vicente Landless Farmers Association that represents the second-generation farmers who are staking their claim to the former Quisumbing estate that was sold to San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI).

The land was granted to the farmers in 1995 but the government took it back in 1996 when it approved the conversion of the estate into an agro-industrial park. This was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1999.

The farmers, who walked 1,700 km from Sumilao to Manila for nearly two months to dramatize their demand, first went to Malacañang on Dec. 7 but no one came out to meet them. The President announced she would see them only last Friday. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*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SAVINGS P2,000

PACKAGE 2
4PGSC9455 10.5 kg. Heavy Duty Washing Machine P31,998 + 4PLEC8647 10.5 kg. Electric Dryer P28,998
= Total Regular Price P60,996 | Cash / Straight Charge DISCOUNTED PRICE P58,996
SAVINGS P2,000

PACKAGE 3
WWT24H 10.5 kg. Washing Machine P26,498 + WSI 24 10 kg. Wall Mounted Dryer P26,498
= Total Regular Price P52,996 | Cash / Straight Charge DISCOUNTED PRICE P50,996
0%interest P16,998.67-3mos. P8,499.33-6mos.
SAVINGS P2,000

PACKAGE 4
AWM 355 5 kg. Front Load Washing Machine P26,998 + AWZ 220 5 kg. Front Load Dryer P22,998
= Total Regular Price P49,996 | Cash / Straight Charge DISCOUNTED PRICE P47,996
0%interest P15,998.67-3mos. P7,999.33-6mos.
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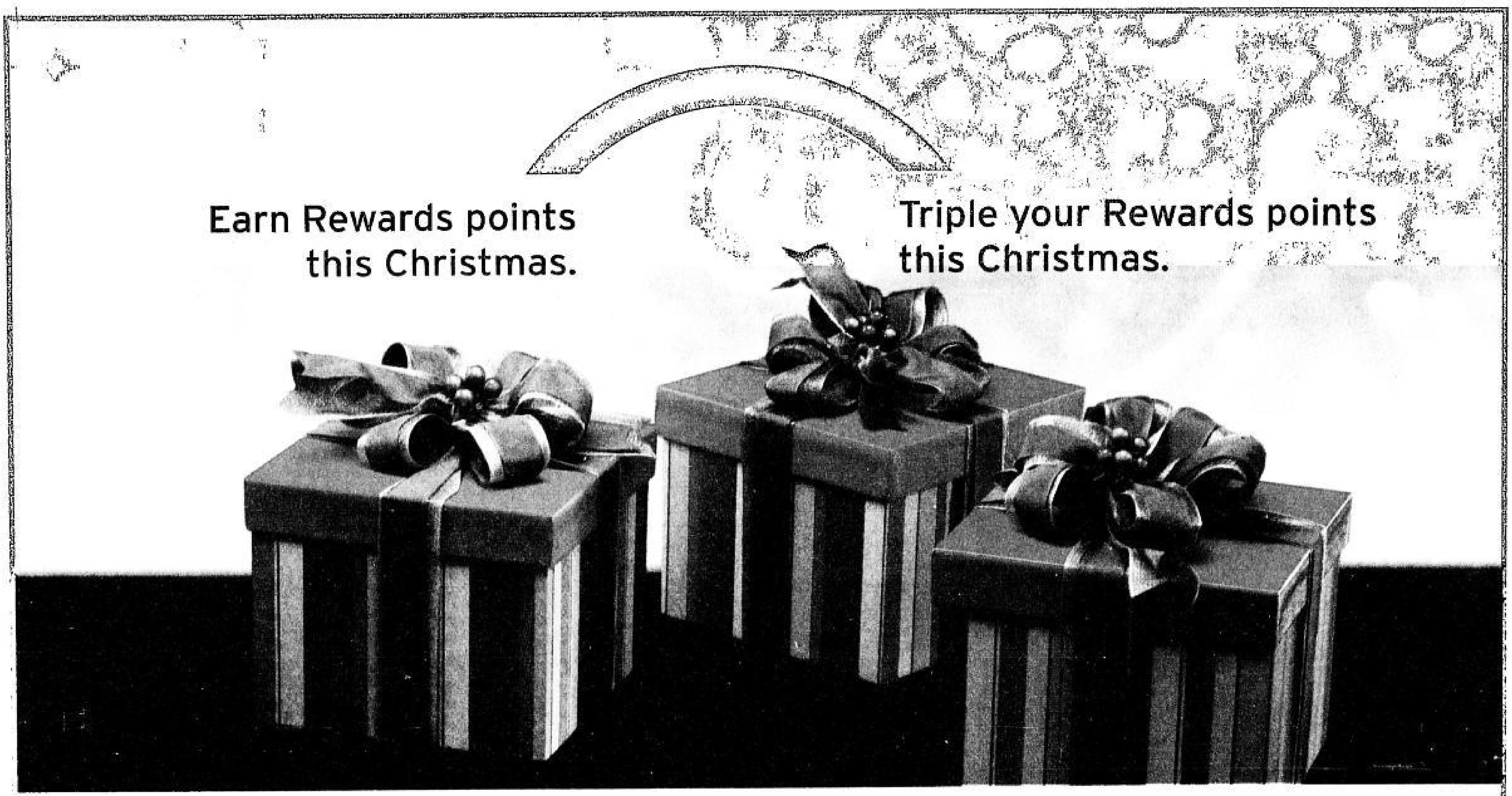
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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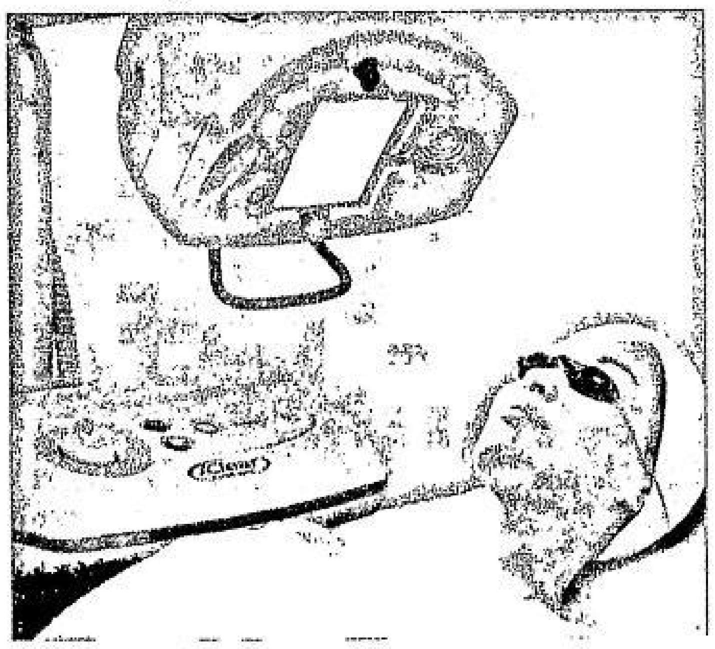
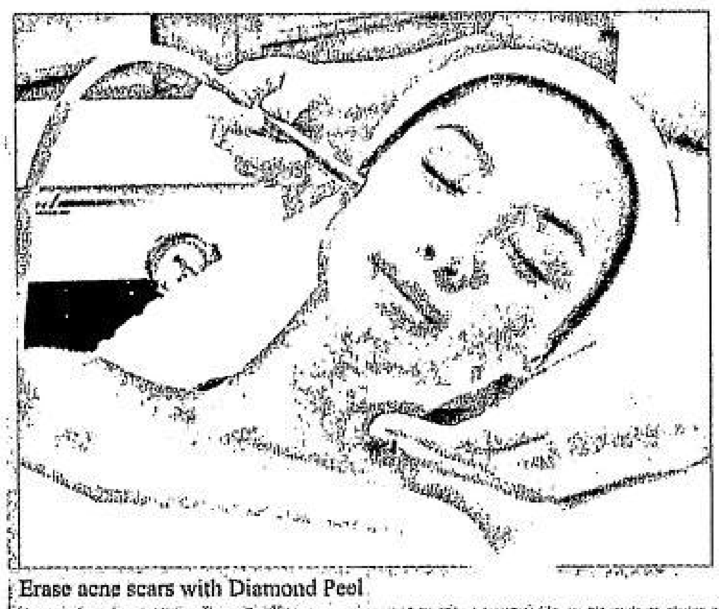


Treat pimples with LightCure Acne Therapy



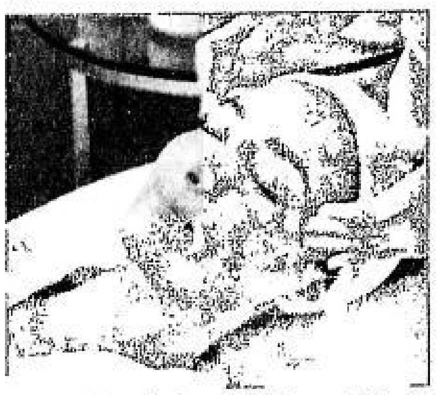
Erase acne scars with Diamond Peel

Your graduation picture. Your wedding. Your 40th birthday party. All these would have been perfect if not for such an untimely annoyance: acne.

Often it occurs on the day when you least want it on your face, like if you are meeting someone you want to impress or will be part of an event involving a lot of pictures getting taken. Acne can start as early as your adolescent years, and can follow you right through adulthood. Whether you're 16, 29 or 40, acne still has the same effect on you: lowered self-esteem, a bad mood and most likely, a self-conscious behavior.

Facial Care Centre offers a 3-step surefire way to permanently combat any type of acne. The first step involves treating the existing acne. In order to eliminate existing pimples and acne cysts, **LightCure Acne Therapy** is a highly effective treatment. It is recommended for mild, moderate and heavy acne. It uses the emission of exact wavelengths of light at the most effective intensity for complete destruction of acne bacteria. LightCure works by targeting sebaceous glands where there are abnormal bacteria responsible for the inflammation of acne lesions. The high-intensity light emitted by LightCure starts a chemical reaction that destroys the acne bacteria without any damage to the normal skin. LightCure is painless, and works faster than conventional treatments like oral antibiotics, hormonal pills, retinoids and injections.

Once the acne has been eliminated, the second step of erasing acne scars follows. Through the **Diamond Peel**, acne scars and other blemishes can be successfully removed. With the use of a diamond dust-coated wand, the skin is exfoliated by the combined action of diamond chips and the cleaning action of a vacuum. As a result, the dead cells in the topmost layer of the skin are removed, leaving a clearer new layer that is smoother and even. Unlike other skin peeling methods, the Diamond Peel requires no downtime and no anesthesia is necessary in performing the procedure. It is non-surgical, non-invasive, extremely safe and effective.



Protect skin with Deep Anti-Bacterial Facial

The final step is the maintenance of the new skin and the prevention of future acne breakouts. The **Deep Anti-Bacterial Facial** is a highly intensive facial that uses the finest natural ingredients to avoid the onset of new acne. It also involves a mild exfoliating method to rid the skin of impurities that are not easily removed by superficial washing and cleansing. Regular treatments ensure smooth, clear, acne-free skin.

With technologically advanced treatments, Facial Care Centre ensures effective acne remedies no matter how severe the case is. The treatments not only eliminate pimples and other blemishes, but will give a healthier skin complexion as well. End your battle with acne today, no matter what age you are. **Call Facial Care for a free consultation at 892-SKIN (7546) / 961-3404 (Pampanga) / 233-7631 (Cebu).**

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Per DTI-NCR Permit #4901, Series of 2007.

GMA thwarts Jalosjos

From page A1

“*Gitawagan daw ni PGMA si Congresswoman Cely Jalosjos-Carreon ug nasuko ngano gidali-dali og pagawas si former Congressman Romeo Jalosjos* (PGMA called Rep. Cely Jalosjos-Carreon and was angry the former congressman’s release was rushed,” a Dapitan official told the INQUIRER.

Carreon is Jalosjos’ sister who represents Zamboanga del Norte’s first district in Congress.

Gonzalez told the INQUIRER that his office was still reviewing the case of Jalosjos after Ms Arroyo in April commuted his sentence to 16 years.

He said that based on his initial “recomputation” of the time left for Jalosjos to serve, the former congressman was eligible for release in April 2009—not yesterday.

News that Jalosjos was to be freed yesterday came in a text message on Saturday night from no less than Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) Director Ricardo Dapat.

Humanitarian reasons

“She (Ms Arroyo) was upset because in her mind, her commutation order meant the former congressman would be released when he reaches 70 years of age,” Gonzalez said in a phone interview.

Jalosjos will turn 70 in 2010.

Gonzalez said Ms Arroyo had given “verbal” instructions that Jalosjos’ release be in keeping with that administrative order. “I have not ordered (his release),” he quoted Ms Arroyo telling him.

Jalosjos ‘confused’

Yesterday’s twist of events left Jalosjos “confused” and “disappointed,” his secretary, Susan Sespeñe, said.

“He doesn’t understand why they’re saying he hasn’t been released. The certificate of discharge did not come from us. It came from them,” Sespeñe said.

According to Dapat’s version yesterday, Jalosjos was never discharged, never left the NBP, and never effectively got out of their custody.

He said reports that Jalosjos had been released were false and that as far as he was concerned, Jalosjos remained a prisoner in the minimum security facility with “living out privileges.”

The “certificate of discharge from prison,” a copy of which the INQUIRER obtained and which paved the way for Jalosjos’ “release” was signed by Supt. Juanito Leopando of the NBP.

Discharge order

Dated Dec. 16, it said in part that Jalosjos “is released from confinement this date, he having completed the sentence upon him by the court with good conduct time allowance on the above cited crimes.”

Asked about the certificate, Dapat said this was just a “preparatory document” that needed the approval of higher authorities.

Barely had the clock struck midnight on Saturday when Jalosjos stepped out of his detention quarters to meet his bodyguard and other members of his staff, Sespeñe recounted.

Tears of happiness

“He had teary eyes maybe because of too much happiness” as the jail officers verified his discharge certificate and took his fingerprints, she said.

At 4:30 a.m., he finally met his wife Jessica and three daughters, including 5-month-old Julia Robert, who was conceived in prison, when he attended *simbang gabi* (pre-Christmas dawn Mass) at the Ina ng Awa parish church on the reservation.

At 6 a.m., Jalosjos went to his resthouse in Katarungan Village, a subdivision on the outskirts of the penitentiary compound. He was spotted by the INQUIRER sitting in front of the house.

Asked about this, Dapat said the subdivision was still “considered part of the NBP reservation.”

Gonzalez said Jalosjos’ “premature” release was based on the computation of former BuCor Director Vicente Vinarao that the ex-congressman was due for release on Dec. 16.

Gonzalez said Vinarao “cited laws dating back to the governor-general (days),” or to the time when the Philippines was still a US colony.

“It’s really a matter of interpretation,” Gonzalez said.

Correction

IN THE DEC. 15 ISSUE, an advertisement on Page I3 of the Super section misstated the schedule of fireworks display at Enchanted Kingdom on certain dates. On Dec. 22-23, Dec. 25-30 and Jan. 1-6, the fireworks will start at 10 p.m.—not 6 p.m.

Ernest helped . . .

From page A1

wildly adventurous designs he showed at luncheon shows at Hyatt’s La Concha or in his gala shows.

Among the country’s fashionable women who wore his clothes, he became known for his designs of exaggerated shoulders and capes. Among these was the highly publicized ensemble Imee Marcos wore at an Experimental Cinema formal event.

Buzz

Ernest was also among the first designers to venture into ready-to-wear. When he had had his fill of fashion, he went into interior design, fashion accessory design, Filipino cuisine and landscaping.

In any of these fields, he didn’t even have formal training, yet he always drew the clientele, created the buzz, if not altogether helped set the creative agenda.

It was as if where he went, people followed. More than two decades ago, the idea of living in Pagsanjan—away from the bustle of Manila—lured him there.

Chic destination

He moved there, opened his café and, in time, helped make Pagsanjan a chic destination, as part of the now popular Via del Sol, or south of Manila corridor perfect for weekend getaways.

In recent years, he became known for his landscape art. Among his works was Shangri-La Mactan.

Like some of his peers, Ernest didn’t need a college education to make a mark and contribute to society. He wasn’t only a designer and a bon vivant, he was an artist.

Last week, he had just reopened Kilib, his lush sprawl in Kilib, Quezon, that would serve southern cuisine and entertain guests in pavilions. Ernest meant it to showcase his landscape art, his cuisine and brand of lifestyle.

His body is expected to be brought from Pagsanjan to Makati City today. His wake will be at Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati.

Top fashion designer . . .

From page A1

suffered wounds in the forehead and just below the right ear, indicating that “he must have been hit by a hard object that led to his death.”

Police, however, could not determine what was used to kill Santiago because no murder weapon was found at the crime scene.

Missing cash and van

About P185,000 in cash and the victim’s Mitsubishi Strada pick-up with plate No. VDZ-530 were missing.

Quoting Paolo Herrera, who introduced himself to police as the victim’s nephew, Tapeño said Santiago had withdrawn P200,000 from a bank, supposedly for a landscaping project in Antipolo City.

Police found P15,000 in the victim’s room.

Assorted jewelry and two camera cellular phones, owned by the victim, could not be found in the house.

“There was a big probability that the motive was robbery and that the robbers decided to kill the victim,” Tapeño said.

Pillow

Tapeño said no evidence of resistance from the victim was found, only a trace of blood on his pillow.

“Probably, the robbers covered his face with a pillow while he was asleep and hit him with a hard object,” he said.

Police are now looking for the pick-up that could lead to the whereabouts of the killer.

An autopsy of Santiago’s body was conducted yesterday afternoon.

Herrera [said to be Santiago’s adoptive son] immediately went to the local police station and asked for assistance after he and other employees found the body, said Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., provincial police director.

Rojas said the assailant might have been known to Santiago.

“There were no signs of any forced entry into the victim’s house. His attacker could have been inside before Santiago was murdered,” he said.

“The fact that the assailant even had time to look for the key of the victim’s vehicle only bolstered our suspicion,” he added.

But friends who went to Santiago’s house upon learning of his death said the house had been apparently broken into, with the window frame dismantled.

Dawn Mass

The victim, who lived alone, had employees in his restaurant, which operates from 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

He was last spotted attending the dawn Mass on Sunday at 4 a.m.

Martin Castillo, one of his neighbors, said the community felt sad “because we lost a good man.”

Castillo said Santiago used to hire workers from the neighborhood whenever he had landscaping projects in other areas.

Anjo Luces, resident manager of a newly opened restaurant in Lucban, Quezon, also owned by Santiago, was shocked upon hearing that he had been killed.

“He had been a good friend for over five years, and I was not expecting he would die that way,” he said. *With a report from Thelma San Juan*

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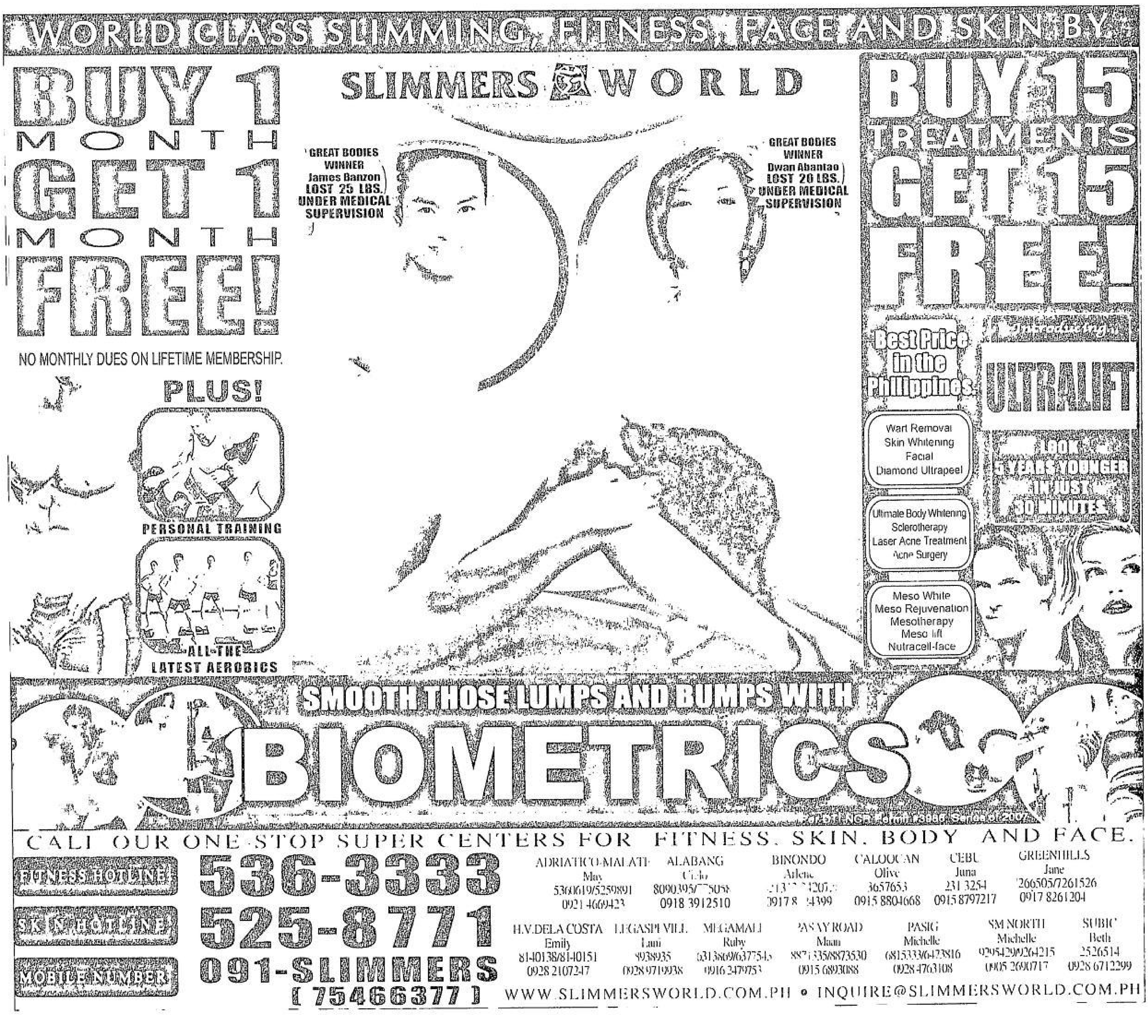

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Top shops locked in battle of bags

From page A1

Over at Bergdorf Goodman, staff members held secret deliberations that stretched late into the night for nine months.

Luxurious makeover

The focus of all this scurrying was not this fall's couture line or next spring's resort collection. It was shopping bags.

Once a flimsy afterthought in American retailing—used to lug a purchase home from the store, then tossed into the trash—the lowly, free store bag is undergoing a luxurious makeover.

From upscale emporiums to mid-price chains, retailers are engaged in a heated competition to make the most durable, fashionable shopping bags.

They are investing millions of dollars in new flourishes like plastic-coated paper (Macy's and Juicy Couture) and heavy fabric cord handles (Abercrombie & Fitch and Scoop).

Walking billboards

Behind the battle of the bags is a significant shift in behavior that has turned consumers into walking billboards for stores.

In cities like New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, customers have begun treating shopping bags as disposable purses that can be reused for weeks, if not months, to carry laundry to the cleaners or lunch to the office.

But only the best bags make the cut. So stores are racing to transform bare-bones bags into lavish free advertising.

"It's an unspoken goal," said Terron E. Schaefer, senior vice president for marketing at Saks. "We want people to keep the bag."

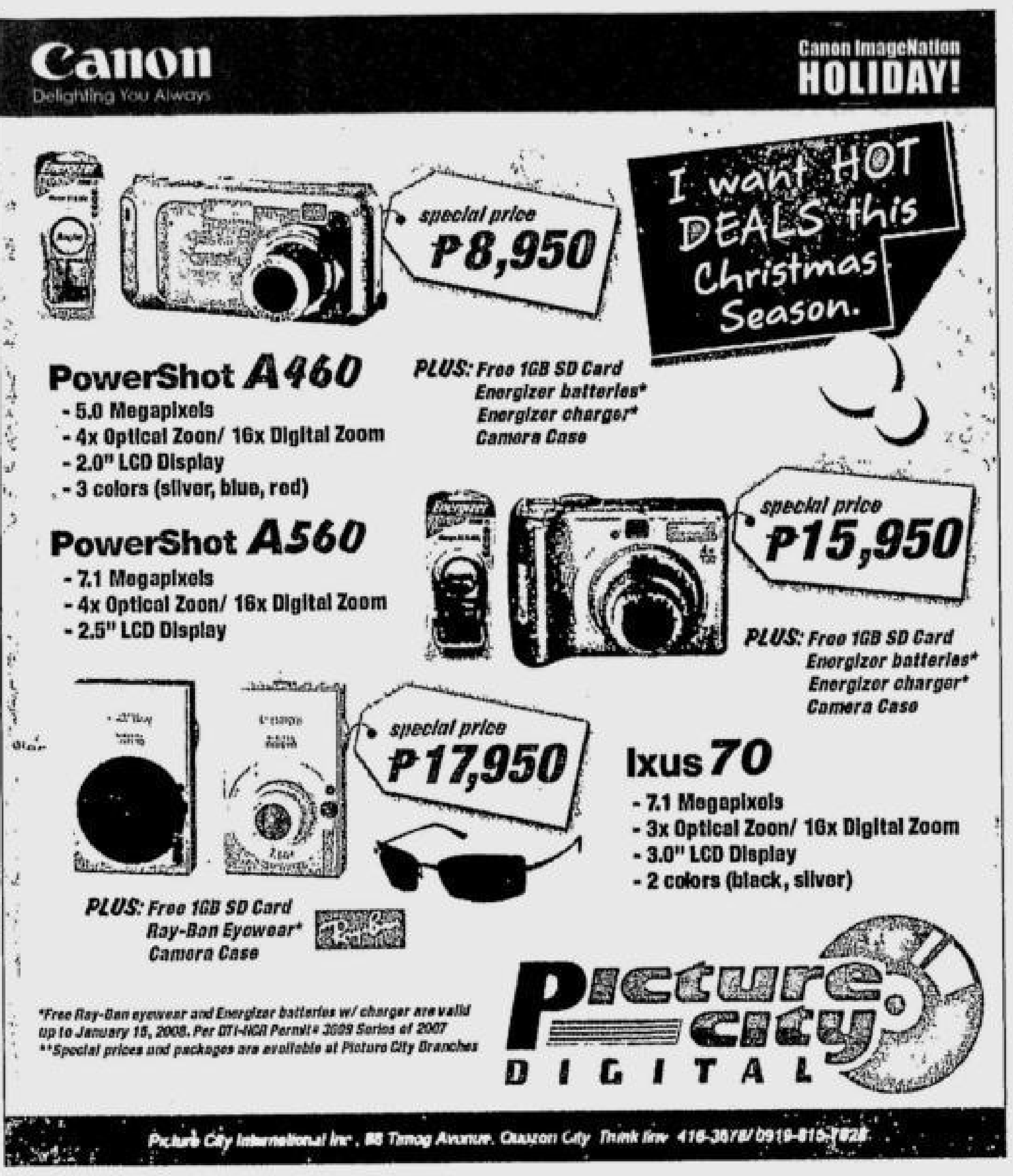
Increasingly, they do. After making a purchase at Lord & Taylor a few weeks ago, Allana Cummings, 19, of Irvington, New Jersey, said she quickly adopted the chain's newly redesigned bag, with its eye-catching white color and seemingly indestructible paper, as "my second purse."

Preferred to handbag

At first blush, the trend of reusable shopping bags would seem at odds with the explosive growth of high-end handbags.

But it turns out that some consumers are eager to walk around with a $2,000 Coach purse on one arm and the Coach shopping bag it came in on the other.

"I often prefer this to my leather handbag," said Kay Scouller, 34, standing on a Manhattan subway platform with a Coach shopping bag, filled with a tube of moisturizer, a pair of sunglasses, and a bottle of water. *New York Times News Service*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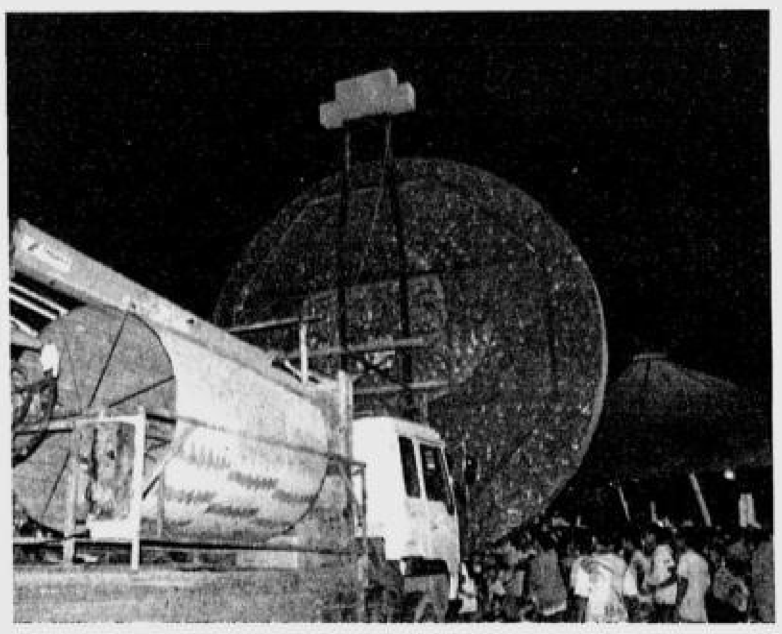

SECRET GADGET. This rotor, a product of Filipino ingenuity, moves the lights in patterns based on a lantern's design.
TONETTE OREJAS/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

Giant lanterns go 'dancing'

From page A1

minute challenge.

The bands were edged out by the advent of stereo and CD (compact disc) players which blasted western ditties.

"We would have added a set of Kapampangan folk songs, but they were rushing to close the program due to security reasons," said Lumanog, 33, a graduate of the University of the Philippines' College of Music.

The brass band was formed by Mayor Oscar Rodriguez in 2004 to revive the dying tradition of musical bands. Members are city government employees who play the flute, clarinet, French horn, trumpet, trombone, baritone, drums and saxophone.

"It was a welcome development when they brought back the live marching band to the festival," said Ivan Henares, a trustee of the San Fernando, Pampanga Heritage Foundation.

Tradition

The lanterns, with thousands of bulbs flashing in no less than 100 patterns, shone brighter than the moon that night.

Historians and craftsmen disagree on when the giant lantern festival actually started.

If the basis of reckoning was the use of the car battery to operate the lanterns, the lantern festival started in 1938, when then President Manuel Quezon came to appease farmers restless over the ownership of their lands.

If the basis was the use of electricity, then it started in 1927 when San Fernando Light and Power Co. was founded.

The festival traces its roots to religious processions and Masses held for nine days at dawn called *lubenas* (novenas) in Bacolor, the town from which San Fernando was created in 1574.

Mayor Rodriguez said at the opening that the festival had become a "show of the Fernandinos' ingenuity and faithfulness to tradition."

5,100 bulbs

The lantern of Barangay Telabastagan—operated with seven rotors, filled with 5,100 bulbs and designed by Arnel Flores—topped the competition. It earned 96.5 points from the 17-member board of judges chaired by former Zambales Rep. Katherine Gordon.

Barangay San Felipe, the defending champion, placed second, while Barangay San Nicolas came up third.

The lanterns were judged on the basis of design, color combination, interplay of lights and rhythm to the music.

In the first round, each lantern "played" for seven minutes to music set by its creator. In the second round, the lanterns "performed" in pairs for five minutes to music set by the festival committee. In the final round, the lanterns "danced" to live music rendered by the brass band.

"*Medyo masakit* (It was quite difficult)," said Joseph San Juan, one of this city's best rotor operators. Not used to hearing a live marching band, he tried to keep up by "feeling the pulse of the music."

Raves

Nileema Noble, United Nations resident coordinator in the Philippines, said the event was "magnificent" because it showed that an old tradition could still flourish in modern times.

Malaysian Ambassador Ahmad Rasidi Hazizi was "very impressed."

"The lanterns are very colorful. It reflected the happiness of the people. We do not have big lanterns in Malaysia but we have small lanterns during Chinese New Year," he said.

Gordon said she and her husband, Sen. Richard Gordon, took part in the festival because the senator "has Kapampangan roots."

"We're friends with Corito Panlilio-Lim (cochair of the festival) and we wanted to show our support for Among Ed (Pampanga Gov. Eddie Panlilio)," she said.

Celebrating ingenuity

Panlilio said the festival "celebrated the ingenuity, creativity and passion for excellence of the Kapampangan."

"Let's look for more ways to get our province more involved in tourism," he said.

Families came in droves, with parents carrying their kids on their shoulders to give them a good view of the lanterns.

The event attracted locals and foreigners, aside from the ambassadors and representatives of Cambodia, Greece, Italy, Laos, Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), Palau, Panama, Qatar, Russia, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and South Korea.

More than 1,000 police officers, soldiers, village guards and six bomb-sniffing dogs secured the three-hour festival. Five fire trucks were seen at the venue, the SM City Pampanga amphitheater.

Heart of the lantern

The lantern owes its magic to the rotor, a rotating cylinder which was originally made of wood, later changed into copper plate and lately, aluminum.

According to accounts, it was lantern-maker Crising Valencia who invented the contraption.

Considered the "heart" of the lantern, the rotor makes the bulbs go on and off in a set of patterns.

Here's how that visual effect is created: All the wires of the bulbs are connected to dozens of steel hairpins arranged in a row. The pins are later made to scratch the surface of the barrel-shaped aluminum sheet, which is the main piece connected to an electrical source.

Parts of the sheet's surface are covered with masking tape corresponding to the patterns of lights.

While the lanterns vary in design, they retain the old parts, such as the *tambor* (middle part), *siku-siku* (star angles), *puntetas* (inner rim) and *palimbun* (rays).

The barrel is rotated with a car wheel, the pins come in contact with exposed or covered parts, enabling the bulbs to either light up or shut off.

Lantern dance

Lantern-maker Roland Quiambao said the lantern festival was held yearly despite communist rebellions or lahar mudflows.

"We make lanterns to bring hope. When you see a lantern, you remember the Star of Bethlehem that guided the Three Kings to Christ, the light of the world," Quimbao said.

The festival is supported by the private sector, enabling the city government to provide a P125,000 subsidy to each of the eight participating villages.

The lanterns will be exhibited for public viewing from Dec. 16 to Dec. 30 at the Paskuhan Village here.

In keeping with the Catholic tradition, the lanterns will be transferred to the Metropolitan Cathedral at the city proper on Christmas Eve.

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Going, going, gone – from HK rich to RP poor

By Philip C. Tubeza
Correspondent

FROM HK$10,000 BIRTHDAY cards to cruises to Antarctica.

These were some of the items offered in a benefit auction that helped a Hong Kong charity raise nearly P30 million in just one night for slum dwellers in the Philippines.

The well-dressed crowd that bid for the items, members and supporters of International Care Ministries (ICM) who gathered at the JW Marriott Hotel on Nov. 15, raised HK$5.1 million (P28 million) for the very poor living in the slums of Negros, Bohol and General Santos City.

"Your generosity will have a real, meaningful impact on the lives of more than 100,000 people. Your generosity has been wonderful and we really appreciate that," said David Sutherland, ICM chair and a managing director at Morgan Stanley.

More than 500 people, including Hong Kong business leaders and expatriates, packed the Marriott ballroom for the banquet, which a private benefactor had generously sponsored. Nevertheless, attendees donated $15,000 per table (or $1,500 per plate).

The guests included ICM partner organizations in the Philippines like the Centre for Community Transformation and Gawad Kalinga, and local government leaders like Mayor Dan Lim of Tagbilaran, Bohol, where ICM has a feeding program.

Change thousands of lives

"Remember, this is going to change the lives of thousands of people. I mean not all of you can trip down to Bacolod or Dumaguete and see what I've seen there," said Ranjan Marwah, one of Hong Kong's top corporate headhunters and the auctioneer for the night.

ICM, a Christian charity, began working in the Philippines in 1992 and has grown enough to provide last year 300,000 kilos of rice and 2.2 million doses of medicine.

"We now target communities where the average income of recipients is less than HK$350 (P1,960) a month. Most of the families we work with are significantly poorer than that," Sutherland said.

ICM works with Christian churches based in the slums to identify the families that need help.

"We invite the pastors of all these different communities for a multi-day training program. We teach them to care for their people in their communities," Sutherland said.

"And then we ask each of them to train half a dozen people in their communities in the same program. Once we have six to eight trained, then we can start a program there," he said.

Thankful patient

One of those who flew in from the Philippines for the banquet was Fredalyn Pabuaya who had suffered from a distended stomach and was helped by ICM. Pabuaya sang the song "Thankful" for the audience.

"Look, we should provide because we can, we are out in Hong Kong, eating in a fine hotel, in a fine restaurant. So please, one more time, is there anyone in this room who hasn't had a chance to either bid or get one of those papers, please raise your hand before the opportunity passes you by," said Marwah, as he urged donations of HK$25,000 for the special medical cases fund.

The items on the auction block, which were all donated, included trips to the El Nido and Amanpulo resorts in the Philippines, a cruise to Antarctica, a vacation in a villa in the South of France, front row seats at the French Open, a chance to play on Wimbledon's tennis courts, and skiing in the exclusive Telluride, Colorado, ski village where actor Sylvester Stallone was famously barred from buying a home by the residents.

Also auctioned off were a HK$150,000 gold and diamond Bathelay watch and paintings by Filipino artists Dominic Rubio, Federico Aguilar Alcuaz and Carlo Magno.

"Look people, this is the greatest place on the planet!" cried a woman pastor as the vacation trip to El Nido in Palawan was being bid out. It eventually fetched HK$95,000 (P522,000).

Besides luxury items and vacations, ICM also bid out HK$10,000 (P55,000) birthday cards.

"Here's the deal," Sutherland said. "If you want a birthday present, what do you do? If you spend HK$10,000, you will feed 125 people. And those 125 people will send you a birthday card on your birthday."

"And [for] HK$50,000, 625 people [will be fed] and when your birthday comes around, in your mail will arrive a DVD with your 600 people singing happy birthday for you," he said.

The money raised at the auction will be used to feed about 15,000 people every week, provide about three million doses of medicine to more than 75,000 patients, and provide free pre-schooling to more than 1,000 children.

In all, the auction raised just over HK$5 million, which Sutherland said was about half of ICM's operating budget for 2007-2008.

"At ICM, we are all very, very grateful for the generosity of our Hong Kong donors," he said.

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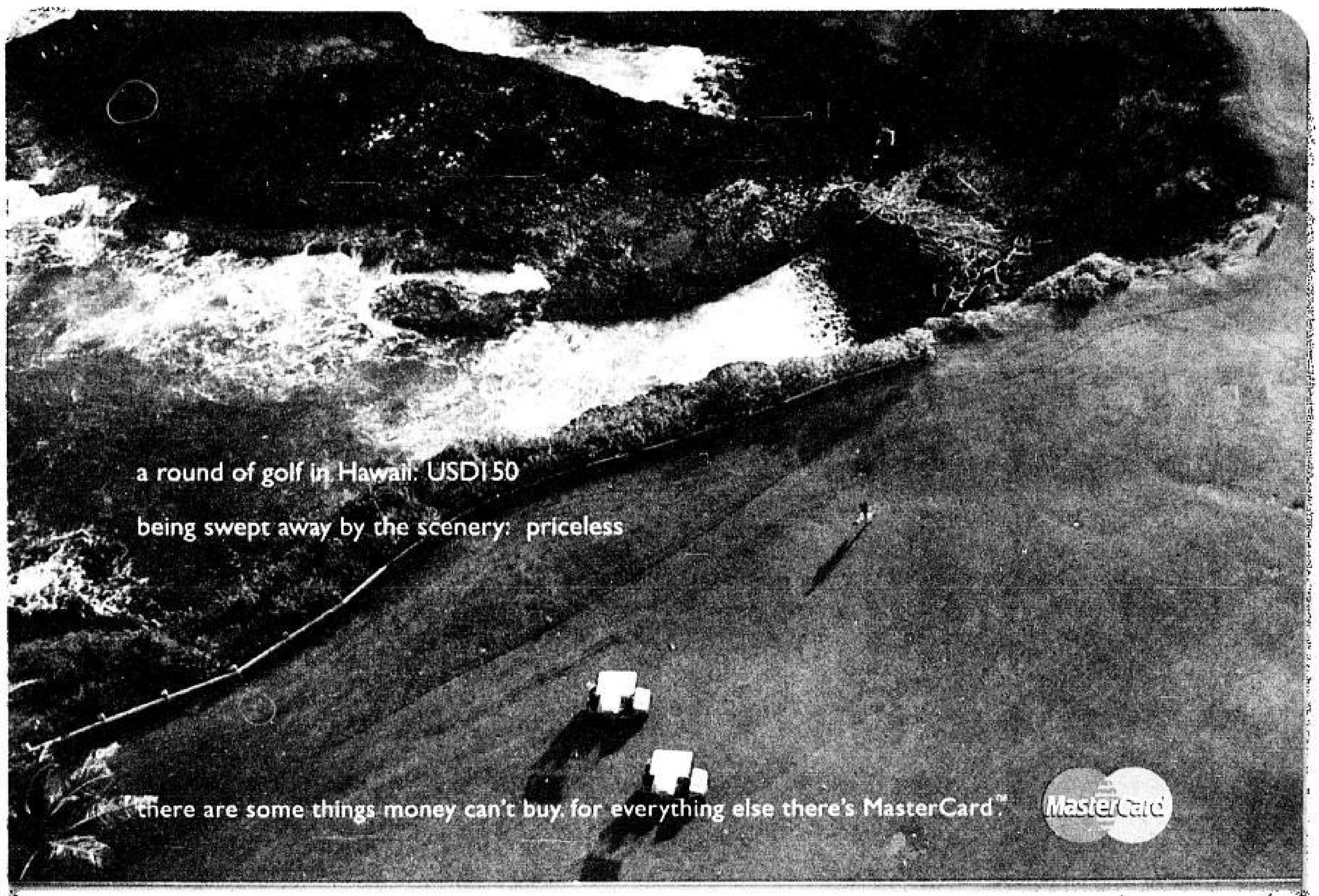
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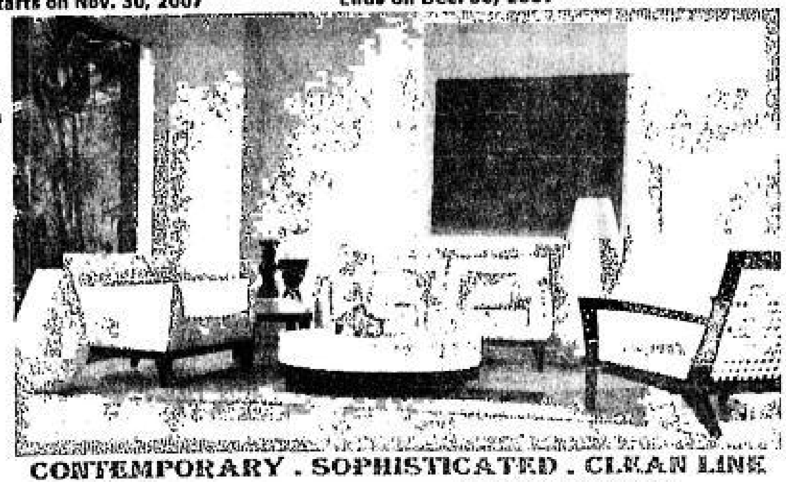

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TURN OVER CEREMONY

AMERICAN executive William M. Johnson turns over his book donation to officials of the Diit-Mercyville Community School in Tacloban City in this file photo.

PDI story starts book donation

From page A1

not receive a single textbook in 2005. The situation was much better in the lower grades, according to teacher in charge (now school administrator) Juliet Lugas-Lim, because there was one book for every three students.

"I was sitting [on the patio] when I read the article," Johnson said, referring to "Tacloban school kids cope with 4 teachers, no textbooks" written by Inquirer Visayas contributor Rolando O. Borrinaga and published in the INQUIRER on June 1, 2006.

The Diit-Mercyville Community School sits on a 3,000-square-meter donated lot 8 kilometers north of the city proper. It started operations in 2002 and is the newest government elementary school in Tacloban. The school serves a community of poor market vendors, farmers and fishermen.

"I read the paper from cover to cover, and this article just stuck out," he said. "I had to do the right thing."

Johnson, 48, is chief executive officer and president of Versar International Assistance Projects Inc., a construction management and engineering services firm in conflict/post-conflict regions.

He said he couldn't get Lugas-Lim's story of not having school supplies out of his head.

"Especially since I live here in Dasma (Dasmariñas Village, Makati City), the land of plenty," Johnson said. "The land of too much, I must say."

Land of plenty

Johnson said he looked around at the multiple BMWs parked on the long driveways in his subdivision. He looked at his own possessions.

"I have plenty. I have been blessed many, many times over," he said. "I realized the problem that seemed so big to Miss Lim was so easy for me to solve. So I had my assistant call the teacher and ask what's going on there."

On the very day the news article came out, Angela Tiangco, one of Johnson's staff, made calls to Department of Education officials in Manila and Tacloban as well as to Lugas-Lim, relaying Johnson's book donation offer.

The next day, Lugas-Lim faxed Johnson a list of books she needed for the pupils of her school.

Then came another problem. Tiangco learned that most of the books were now out of stock or up for revision.

'Out of stock'

"One of the things that just drove me crazy is [hearing the phrase] 'out of stock,'" Johnson said, grimacing. "When it comes to kids and the country, [saying] it's 'out of stock,' that is a major problem."

The obstacle strengthened his resolve to help. Johnson also told his colleagues about the school with no textbooks.

"I was talking to my staff in a conference. I didn't put any pressure on them at all," he said. "They all contributed. One guy pulled out [his] money and said, 'Go. Just go and do what you can do.'"

Tiangco, with the help of the DepEd, was able to collect surplus books from other regions all over the country and had them sent to Tacloban before 2006 ended.

Johnson said his visit to the school was priceless.

"They had a very nice reception for me," he said, smiling. "They were just wonderful."

There was money left over from the books which was used to renovate one of the school buildings and provide the entire school with electricity.

Love for education

Johnson said he inherited his love for the education system from his father, a lawyer and a teacher.

Born and raised in Seattle, Washington, he left home when he was 18 to join the US Navy.

"When I was growing up, I had the GI Joe action figure," Johnson said. "Remember those? Tough-looking guy. He had an orange wet suit, close-cropped hair. I used to throw him in the pool. I remember thinking how cool it would be to be like him."

Safe zone

Johnson became a Navy diver and stayed with the military until he was 42. "I spent my formative years in the Navy diving and doing construction. I've been all over the world, but I'm always drawn back to the Philippines."

He decided to settle here in 2004 and married a Filipino in July. They now have a son.

Johnson said Manila was his "safe zone."

"Manila is my refuge from the rest of the world. I work in conflict zones, post-conflict zones, but Manila is my safe zone." he said.

Johnson threw a Christmas party on Saturday with friends and colleagues, aiming to raise more funds for the community school.

Giving back

He said he was not criticizing the Arroyo administration, but he wanted to stress the importance of education.

"The President has a tremendously tough job," he said. "You will never know how hard the job is until you sit in that chair. But everyone knows that the Filipino work force is the most educated, hardest-working workforce you can get anywhere in the world."

"Everybody wants Filipinos. It says a lot about the educational values of Filipinos, the strong family commitment to education. So the stage is set. What we don't have is the consistent funding," he said.

Is he willing to help schools other than Mercyville?

"Absolutely," Johnson said. "I don't plan to be CEO/president forever. I want to take what I got and give back."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, December 17, 2007
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Gen 49:2, 8-10
Gospel: Matthew 1:1-17

This is the account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (their mother was Tamar), Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron of Aram. Aram was the father of Aminadab, Aminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz. His mother was Rahab. Boaz was the father of Obed. His mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse.

Jesse was the father of David, the king. David was the father of Solomon. His mother had been Uriah's wife.

Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Then came the kings: Abijah, Asaph, Jehoshaphat, Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah.

Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

After the deportation to Babylon Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel and Salathiel of Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud, Abiud of Eliakim, and Eliakim of Azor. Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, and Akim the father of Eliud. Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar of Matthan, and Matthan of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and from her came Jesus who is called the Christ—the Messiah.

There were then fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, and fourteen generations from David to the deportation to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the deportation to Babylon to the birth of Christ.

Commentary

This is the week of rejoicing. The time approaches quickly. Now we are to assemble and listen, not just to the ancient words from more than 5,000 years ago when Jacob declared to his children the promise of the Lion of Judah to come, but also to the words of Jesus who was born more than 2,000 years ago. Jesus was born into history, a history of faith encompassing the history of the world. He was born of men and women—found in Matthew's genealogy—who broke the law to make justice happen (Tamar), of outsiders who heard the word of Yahweh and helped his people (Rahab), of strangers who became family because of compassion to in-laws (Ruth), and even of those who conspired with murderers for position in society (the wife of Uriah), and finally of Mary, betrothed to Joseph of the house of David. That house was once the glory of Israel, but now they are just the poor in occupied territory of the Roman empire, nobodies who still belonged to God and are vowed to him in covenant. And the long awaited one is born into the world and has been in the world for so long. Will he be born in us and our world this year?

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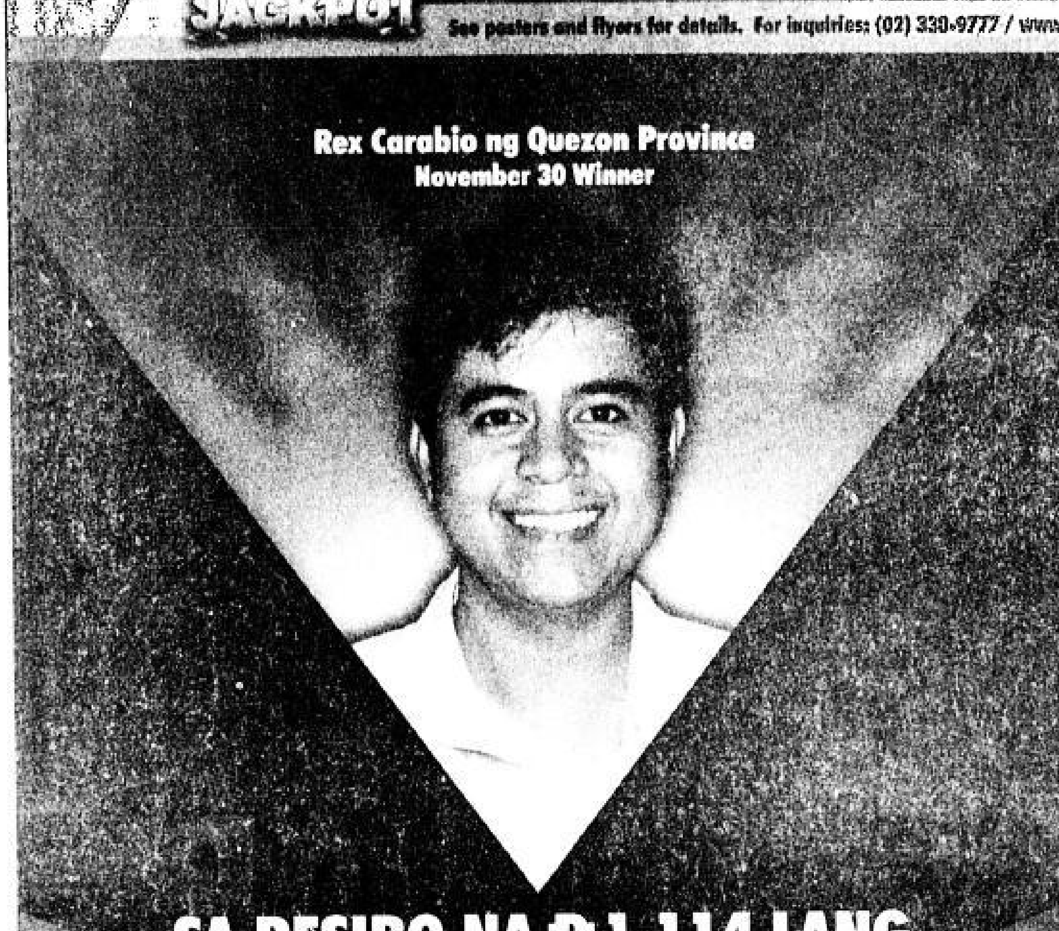

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No rigging, says Transco bid winner

From page A1

the bidding conducted by Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

Brown said Razon, head of port operator International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) and treasurer of the administration Team Unity during the May senatorial elections, would immediately divest his less than 2-percent interest in the consortium.

Opposition senators said Jose Ibazeta, president of PSALM, was concurrently director of ICTSI and its subsidiaries and that his participation in the largest privatization of government assets in history was irregular.

Ms Arroyo's brother, Diosdado Macapagal Jr., has also been linked to Monte Oro.

Sen. Jamby Madrigal has vowed to go to the Supreme Court to nullify Tuesday's auction and block Monte Oro's bid to secure a franchise from Congress to operate the Transco assets. Monte Oro is required to get the license within one year. Otherwise, operation of the Transco assets will revert to the government.

Brown pointed out that four different groups had been prequalified to join the auction after they had complied with PSALM requirements.

Two bidders backed out at the last minute. Industry sources earlier said pressure was brought to bear on the two groups that withdrew even though one was prepared to make an offer as high as $4.2 billion.

Complex evaluation

"The evaluation process is complex and involves many people at many layers—from the lowest-level professional staff to the PSALM board. To manipulate the process either for or against a bidder will be extremely difficult and almost impossible for Mr. Ibazeta. If you are aware of the bidding rules, Ibazeta had no discretion in determining whether one could qualify or not," Brown said in a statement.

"You have to give credit to the professional men and women of PSALM. To insinuate otherwise is unfair to these people."

Razon owns, through his Surestre properties, 4.9 percent of Monte Oro Grid Resources, which has only a 30-percent share in the winning consortium (its major foreign partner is State Grid Corp. of China) which gives the port cargo king 1.49-percent indirect shareholdings, Brown explained.

"More importantly, Mr. Razon had no hand at all in the bidding and valuation process within the group. We had a very professional group that evaluated the bid and that came up with the winning strategy. Mr. Razon has issued a statement that he will divest from Monte Oro," he said.

Narrow results

Brown explained that the narrow gap between bid offers—$3.9 billion by Monte Oro and $3.905 by the San Miguel Corp. consortium led by Ramon Ang—showed that both groups were looking at the same corporate data and market expectations for Transco in the next 25 years.

"Based on our evaluation, because we believe we can bring in value to Transco, we estimated the efficiencies we gain in the next 25 years. This will come from improvements in system efficiency where we expect lower numbers of tripping per year, faster response to disasters, more looped networks, and state-of-the art systems," he said.

"Given the very high regulatory risk we believe no responsible bidder will go far from the RAB (regulated asset base). Knowing our worthy competitor San Miguel as being a responsible company to its shareholders, we expected them to have also realized this regulatory risk and not, as can be seen, bid far beyond the RAB," Brown said.

Potential broadband network

He said that the Monte Oro offer included the potential of using Transco's fiber optic cables embedded in the transmission lines as a backbone for a national broadband network.

"We expected Two Rivers of Metro Pacific (which runs PLDT and Smart) to bid. We estimated the value to 'light up' the dark fibers. Then we looked at the number of 'drop-off' stations in the network," Brown said.

"We then estimated the Internet penetration (IP) of the Philippines. We then estimated that we will be able to capture a significant fraction of the IP business in the Philippines in the coming years. Given our huge population, we believe we can do this even without getting from the existing customers. Based on these general assumptions, we estimated the value of the IP business."

Brown refused to be drawn into a word war with a disgruntled bidder, the La Costa group of former Finance Secretary Roberto de Ocampo and nickel miner Salvador Zamora II.

La Costa is seeking a writ of injunction from a Makati court to stop the privatization, alleging violation of the antigraft law. It says it was disqualified by Ibazeta from the bidding because it was willing to offer $6 billion for Transco as it gave a higher value for its broadband potential.

Brown said the La Costa offer was based on "hypothetical" figures.

"Given the conditions of the bid and the particular provisions of the Concession Agreement, our shareholders and funders could not and should not take unnecessary financial risk by bidding way beyond our bidding price," he said.

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Anti-Red law won't stop insurgents

From page A1

ex-Soviet Union in 1991.

The 1957 Anti-Subversion Law has failed to crush the homegrown rebel movement, and a modern and democratic Philippine government has run out of weapons to end the world's longest-running communist insurgency.

The proposed revival of this law would reverse 15 years of the trend set by Republic Act No. 7636, which repealed RA 1700 (the Anti-Subversion Law), opening the political system to participation by communist party-affiliated organizations in parliamentary politics.

When RA 1700 was enacted by the Garcia administration, the Magsaysay administration had crushed the Huk rebellion with a combination of innovative military action and political and administrative reforms that diminished government corruption and military abuses.

RA 1700, as a follow-up measure to the successful military effort of President Ramon Magsaysay, failed to consolidate the military success.

When President Fidel Ramos signed RA 7636 in 1992, he declared:

"Today, we repeal (RA 1700) confident of our national stability, and confirmed in the resilience of our democracy. By assuring communist insurgents of policy space we also challenge them to compete under our constitutional system and free market of ideas, which are guaranteed in them under the rule of law."

As a result of the repeal, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its affiliated organizations were recognized as legal organizations, and membership in these organizations was not held as a crime.

President Ferdinand Marcos' martial law regime used the full force of the Anti-Subversion Law to crush the resurgent communist insurgency carried out by the New People's Army.

But Marcos' hardline action failed. Instead, the CPP's military arm increased to between 10,000 and 15,000 guerrillas by 1983 and 1986, when his regime was overthrown.

Guided by this failure, Ramos shifted to a policy of attraction by opening up the parliamentary stream to broader participation by groups even with leftist philosophies, provided they did not advocate the armed overthrow of the government and did not participate in rebellion.

This led to the election of party-list representatives to Congress who did not come from the traditional political parties. Instead of using the punitive weapons of RA 1700, the Ramos administration increased the punishment for rebellion, as the weapon to counter the communist insurgents.

Revival of failed approach

The revival of RA 1700 is not only a throwback to the political orientation of a repressive response to the insurgency but also to a failed approach.

The leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, with long experience in fighting insurgency, does not seem to have learned from the failure of its past campaigns.

In supporting the revival of RA 1700, the generals seek to do more of the same.

One is not sure whether Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., AFP chief of staff, is echoing the preference of Ms Arroyo or whether the President echoes the military establishment's point of view.

The more-of-the-same approach is highlighted by military figures saying that since the late 1960s, the communist guerrillas have been active in 69 of 81 provinces.

Esperon has said that the AFP expects to reduce the number of rebels to 3,000 fighters from 7,000 by 2009.

A freer hand

Esperon seems to suggest that with the repeal of RA 7636, the security forces will have a freer hand in killing suspected insurgents and crushing their rebellion in two years mainly by military action, unaccompanied by reforms in governance.

In her speech at the local peace and security assembly in Masbate, Ms Arroyo set the tone for floating the trial balloon for reviving RA 1700. She said the communist rebels "are making Bicol a hostage" with their attacks that have discouraged investors in the region.

"It's time for their disruption and violence of human rights to be put to rest so that the nation can move ahead," she said.

"If we are to become a First World country, we have to put a stop to their ideological nonsense and their criminal acts once and for all. It's either we get rid of them now, or we get rid of them later. Whatever happens, they must be stopped."

This message can only by read by the anticommunist hardliners in the security forces as either an order of battle, a license to kill, or the launching of a new round of death squad killings of political activists.

Alston report

The final report of Philip Alston, human rights rapporteur of the United Nations, has said two policy initiatives are of special importance to understanding why the killings continue.

First, the military's counterinsurgency strategy "increasingly focuses on dismantling civil society organizations that are purported to be CPP front groups." Second, the criminal justice system has failed to arrest and convict people behind the extrajudicial executions.

"This is partly due to a distortion of priorities that has law enforcement officials focused on prosecuting civil society leaders rather than their killers," said the Alston report.

This is the mind-set from which springs the new initiatives to revive the Anti-Subversion Law and throw back the country to the black era of anticommunist repression half a century ago. It has a large constituency in the security forces.

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2 Navy execs buck ruling in graft case

TWO OF THE EIGHT Navy officers facing three counts of graft for the alleged irregular purchase of P2 million worth of medicine by the Philippine Navy in 1990 have challenged a Sandiganbayan ruling upholding their indictment.

Capt. Jesus Biola and Lt. Commander Leonardo Gamboa, through their counsel, filed a motion for reconsideration with the antigraft court's First Division disputing the price list that the prosecution used as a "meter stick" to determine the supposed overprice in the procurement of the medicines.

Their lawyer, Romeo Artazo Jr., argued that the prosecution had submitted to the court a price list different from that used by the Commission on Audit to establish overpricing in government financial dealings.

Thus, Artazo said, there was a "substitution" of price list, making it "immaterial and irrelevant" as evidence in court.

Artazo said the COA, in its audit, should have canvassed suppliers around Cavite City to determine the prevailing market price of medicines in the area.

"Since there was no such canvass conducted and no canvass sheet adduced by the prosecution to support its allegations... its evidence is insufficient to establish the existence of overprice, thus accused is entitled to acquittal," the lawyer said.

The two officers, along with six others, were also accused of falsifying documents such as the canvass proposals in the purchase of drugs from the Porta Vaga Pharmacy owned by coaccused Victoriano Chua which were allegedly overpriced by P1.19 million. *Jocelyn R. Uy*

Top young traders sought

THE AYALA FOUNDation Inc., Department of Trade and Industry-National Capital Region and the office of Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. are sponsoring the search for the first "Business Plan Competition for Young Entrepreneurs" this month.

The competition aims to discover the potentials of NCR-based entrepreneurs, 35 years and under, with either start-up or existing, micro- or medium- scale agri-based businesses such as woodcarving, aquatic related enterprises, jewelry making, food processing, handicraft, soap making or those that utilize indigenous materials and native products.

The three categories are young entrepreneur (individual enterprise and group enterprise), student entrepreneur (college students only) and outstanding young SME business, with winners for each category receiving P500,000, P300,000 and P100,000, respectively, and P200,000 each to the top 10 young SMEs.

Interested parties may contact the DTI-Ayala-Magsaysay Business Competition Secretariat at 752-1185 or log on to www.ayalafoundation.org, www.starfish-magazine.com or www.dtincr.ph.

Deadline for submission of entries is noon of Dec. 19.

INTEGRATED BAR OF THE PHILIPPINES

STATEMENT OF CONCERN

The culture of corruption, dishonesty and deceit that pervades our government is abominable.

We have not forgotten the issues that rocked the nation in the past — the anomalous election computerization deals, the agriculture fertilizer scam, the Northrail scandal, the Diosdado Macapagal highway overprice, , irregularities during the May 2007 national elections, and the aborted NBN deal. These controversies clearly show a malignant social gangrene that afflicts the nation's leadership. Of course, on top of the more prominent irregularities, we are exposed every so often to news of smuggling, extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances, and ghost projects in government agencies.

Just a month ago, huge amounts of money were distributed to legislative and local officials right inside the halls of Malacañang Palace. The Filipino people asked for answers, and what did we get? Flimsy and belated explanations peddled by Malacañang's spin doctors that were untrue, unbelievable and utterly insulting to anyone with a functioning brain.

These incidents dishearten a citizenry who is regularly fed reports of a supposedly improving economy which we cannot feel. When we vote, there is a lingering suspicion that our collective voice will be subverted. When we pay our taxes, there is frustration that our hard-earned money will be used not to pave our roads and improve social services.

And now the clincher. Results of a recent opinion poll show that many Filipinos perceive the present administration to be the most corrupt in recent history. This does not raise eyebrows anymore, because deep inside, many of us believe it to be true.

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines strongly condemns these continuing acts of a government whose moral fiber has worn thin and whose conscience has seemingly vanished. A government which has mastered the art of cover-up and manipulation finds its constitutional right to lead diminished. It betrays the people's trust when it thrives not on good governance but on sustained corruption.

We need to act now. We challenge the Filipino citizenry to channel their rightful indignation and disappointment into legal means of expression.

We lament Congress' move of killing the most recent impeachment complaint. Dear congressmen, please act on what is right, not when the price is right. As for our senators, we admonish you to continue your probes on government anomalies and questionable transactions.

We are now all witness to a government that dampens our hopes and fails to positively inspire; a government which shamefully pampers the already rich and powerful and pays mere lip service to the interest of millions who are impoverished.

It is but proper that we let a government like this see, hear and feel our growing anger.

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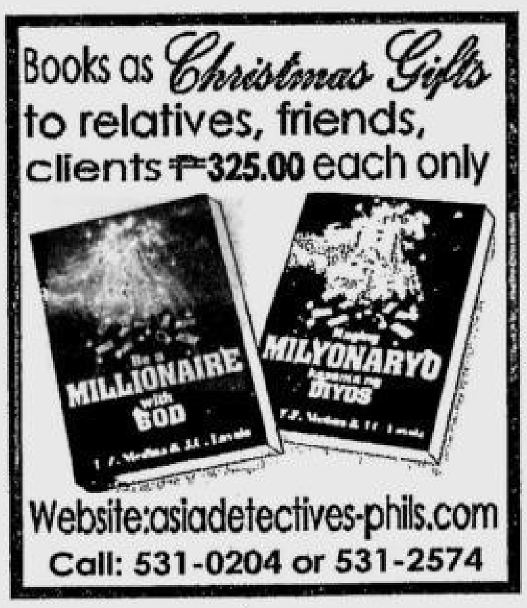
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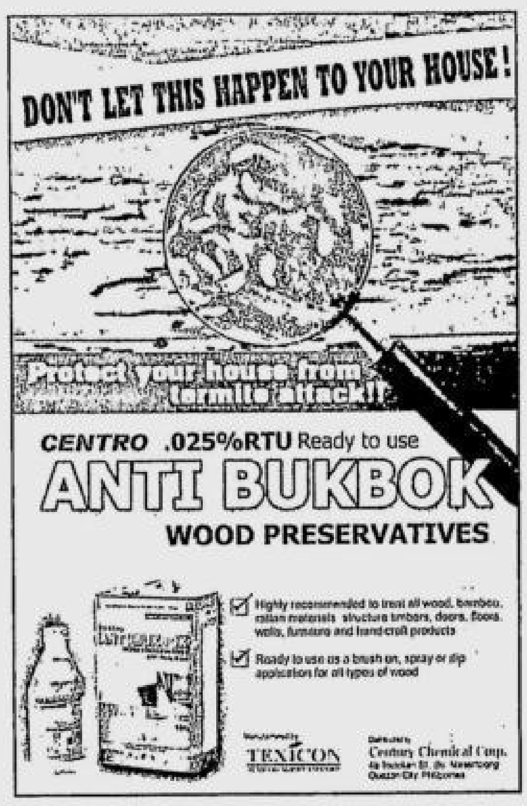
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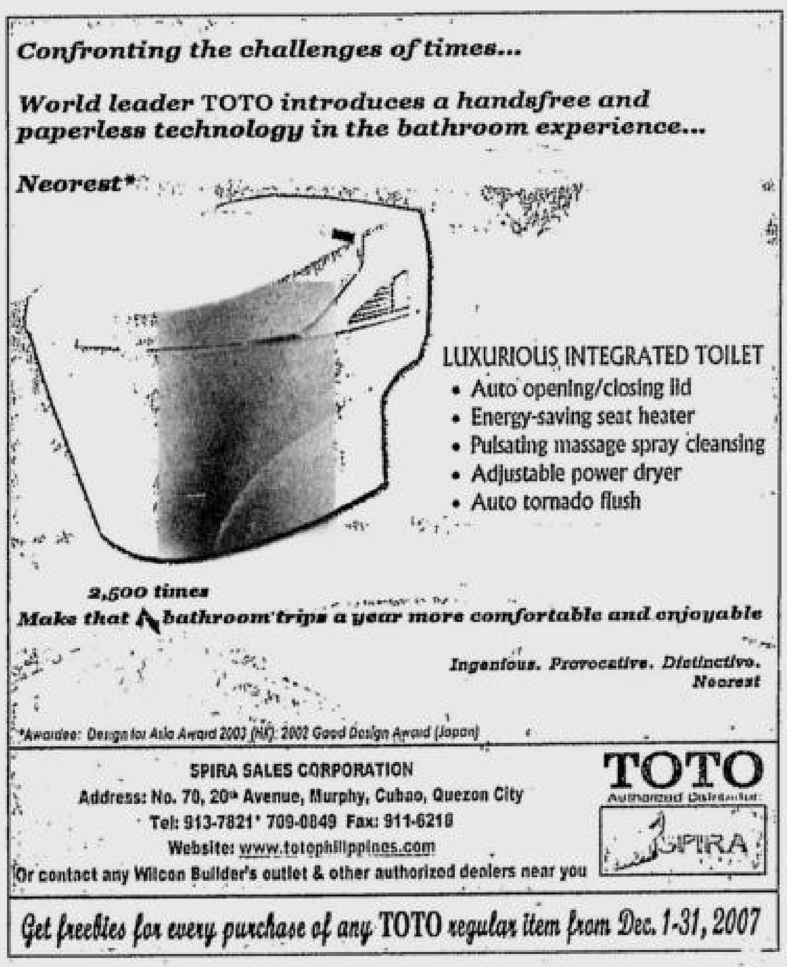
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207 of 236 solons back English as medium of instruction

A BILL SEEKING TO reinstate English as the medium of instruction in Philippine schools is gathering steam at the House of Representatives.

The so-called "English Bill" of Cebu Rep. Eduardo Gullas has attracted 206 coauthors, a number its principal proponent said all but assured its passage. There are 236 congressmen.

As House Bill No. 305, it seeks to supersede the government's existing "bilingual" policy, which allows the use of English and Filipino as the mediums of instruction.

The bill instead assigns English as the sole medium from Grade 3 to fourth year high school, while keeping the current language policy for college students.

Under the measure, schools will be given the option of using English, Filipino or a regional language to teach subjects from preschool to Grade 2.

It also prescribes the teaching of English and Filipino as separate subjects throughout elementary and high school, while seeking to "enliven" English as the "language of interaction in schools." *Christian V. Esguerra*

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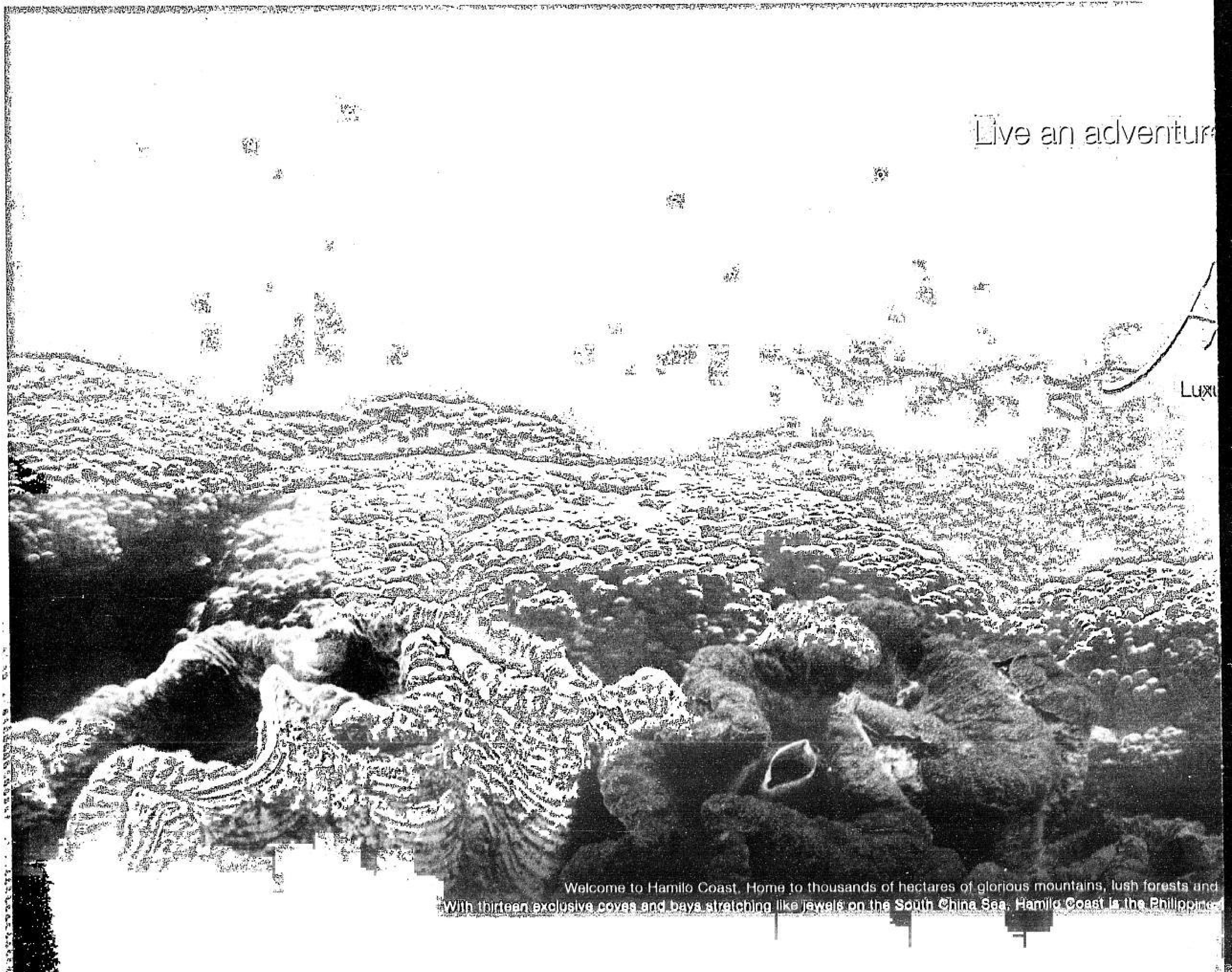

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GMA seen extending Esperon's term

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Nikko Dizon

OPPOSITION SENATORS YESTERDAY SAID they were wary of a reported plan by President Macapagal-Arroyo to extend the term of Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

Esperon is scheduled to end his term on Feb. 9 next year, when he reaches the military's mandatory retirement age of 56.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday said an extension had never been discussed in national security cluster meetings, but admitted that he had heard rumors about it.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said he too had heard talk of the President's plan to extend Esperon's term but he did not know for how long. "I won't oppose it. I will let her destabilize herself," said Lacson in a text message to the INQUIRER.

Esperon, former Army chief before he was named chief of staff in July 2006, reportedly played a pivotal role in crushing an attempted coup led by Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim in February last year, and again last Nov. 29.

He has also expressed support for a controversial move to revive the Anti-Subversion Law, repealed after the martial law years, as a means to stamp out the decades-old insurgency problem.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the President might just want to give Esperon an extra few months for "security purposes."

But Pimentel said he was more concerned about Esperon's "golden parachute" once he steps down as the most powerful military man in the country.

"I don't think he will fade into oblivion without a whimper. It's his golden parachute that is more disturbing. He'll surely land a good paying job so that the President can secure him and keep him on a leash while in pasture," said Pimentel, noting the President's penchant for rewarding loyal military officers with high-paying government posts when they retire.

Esperon was one of the generals mentioned in the "Hello Garci" tapes that alleged cheating by Ms Arroyo in the 2004 elections.

Reacting to the rumors circulating in military circles and through text messages of the extension of his term, Esperon sounded piqued.

"*Grabe* (That's too much)," said Esperon in a phone interview.

"Like I said before, I will be honored if my term will be extended but there are a lot of other officers who are capable of taking over," he said.

Esperon seemed particularly irked by talk that his wife was being cited as the source of the rumors of his extension. *With Christine O. Avendaño*

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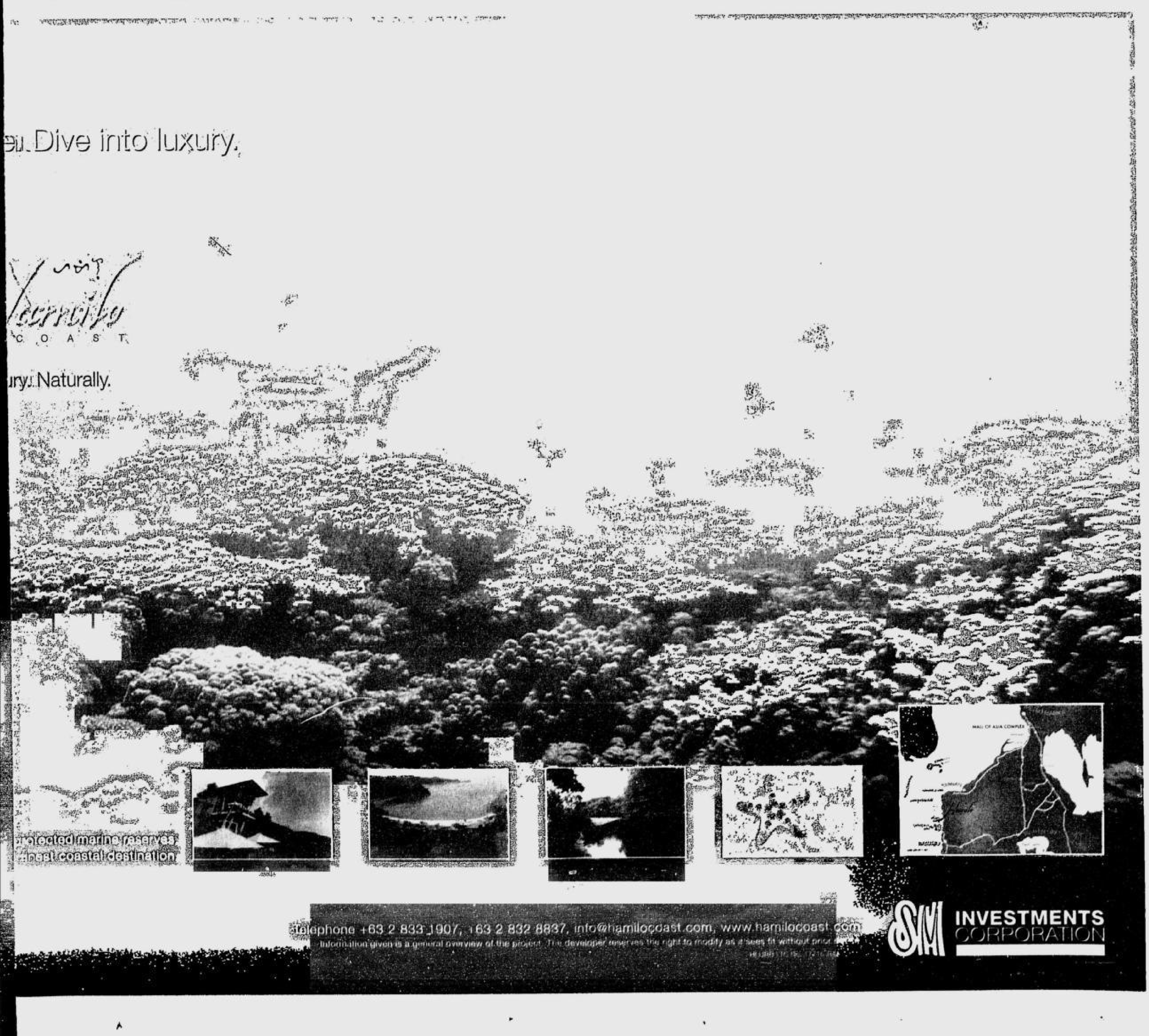

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OPINION

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Raping justice

EDITORIAL

CONVICTED RAPIST ROMEO JALOSJOS IS SAID TO be ready to leave prison a free man; his victim, who is now in her 20s but was 11 years old at the time of the crime, has been reduced to sending an angry e-mail to the Department of Social Welfare and Development. "She's very upset. She can't believe it's happening," the victim's former counsel said.

But this is the Philippines in the year 2007, under Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and rapists and plunderers and assassins get preferential treatment. On Jan. 1, in an editorial entitled "Rapist's justice," we wrote about the Arroyo administration's assault on the rule of law, after its agents transferred convicted rapist Daniel Smith—in the middle of the night, despite the lack of a court order—to the US Embassy. The illegal transfer was obviously an attempt to please the United States. But the "same spirit of expediency animates other initiatives that will forever be associated with this administration ... They are all marked by the same attitude to law: What is legal is what we can get away with."

Rather like rape itself, actually: an act of violence that seeks to intimidate victims into submission, and thus allow criminals to get away with the crime.

The assaults on the rule of law have continued. The absolute pardon granted to deposed President Joseph Estrada remains a divisive issue because it was obviously undertaken for political expediency, and because Estrada refuses to acknowledge any shortcoming or offer any restitution. The conditional pardon granted to former sergeant Pablo Martinez, who was convicted for his role in the assassination of opposition leader Ninoy Aquino, is similarly controversial—it brings us farther away from, rather than closer to, a resolution of the mystery surrounding the assassination, a true turning point in our history.

And now, this: the much-reported granting of parole to Jalosjos, the wealthy ex-politician who is a political ally of the President's. His early release, after some 14 years in prison, is possible because of good behavior, some officials have taken pains to point out. But that's like saying that a box of matches in the hands of an arsonist is the real cause of a given fire. The true cause of Jalosjos' early release, when it comes, is the President's decision to commute his sentence last April, from two life (40-year) terms to only 16 years. That decision was like putting lit matches in the hands of a known pyromaniac.

No question about it: The Arroyo administration has prepared the groundwork for the once and future politician's Christmas release. No amount of dissembling from Malacañang officials can disguise that essential fact.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita either deliberately misrepresented the situation or is shockingly ignorant of it. He said there was no recommendation from the Board of Pardons and Parole for Jalosjos' early release. "There are no papers, no documents," he said. And then the clincher: Ermita said Jalosjos was not eligible for **pardon** because he wasn't 70 years old yet. True, but you don't need to be 70 to be **paroled**.

No one disputes the President's prerogative to grant executive clemency; in legal language borrowed from theology, the exercise of that prerogative is an "act of grace." But the President is given those awesome powers to rectify the sometimes inevitable errors of justice, not to violate the rule of law. The exercise of that fateful prerogative is meant to uphold what lawyers call the majesty of the law, not to soil the administration of justice with the dirt rags of politics.

What does a rapist like Jalosjos learn from President Arroyo's act of grace? That this President will take care of her own. If that means launching a fresh attack on the rule of law, then so be it: She will commute a rapist's life sentence to repay a political favor, pardon an assassin to spite political opponents, undo a conviction to ensure her political survival, transfer a convicted US Marine without a court order to curry US support, feign inutility in extraditing a key campaign financier, issue an immoral executive order to protect her secretaries and generals from a Senate investigation, condone the incendiary policy of a favorite general.

Caught in the web of the law, a rapist like Jalosjos will say: I'm a friend of the President's. It's only a matter of time.

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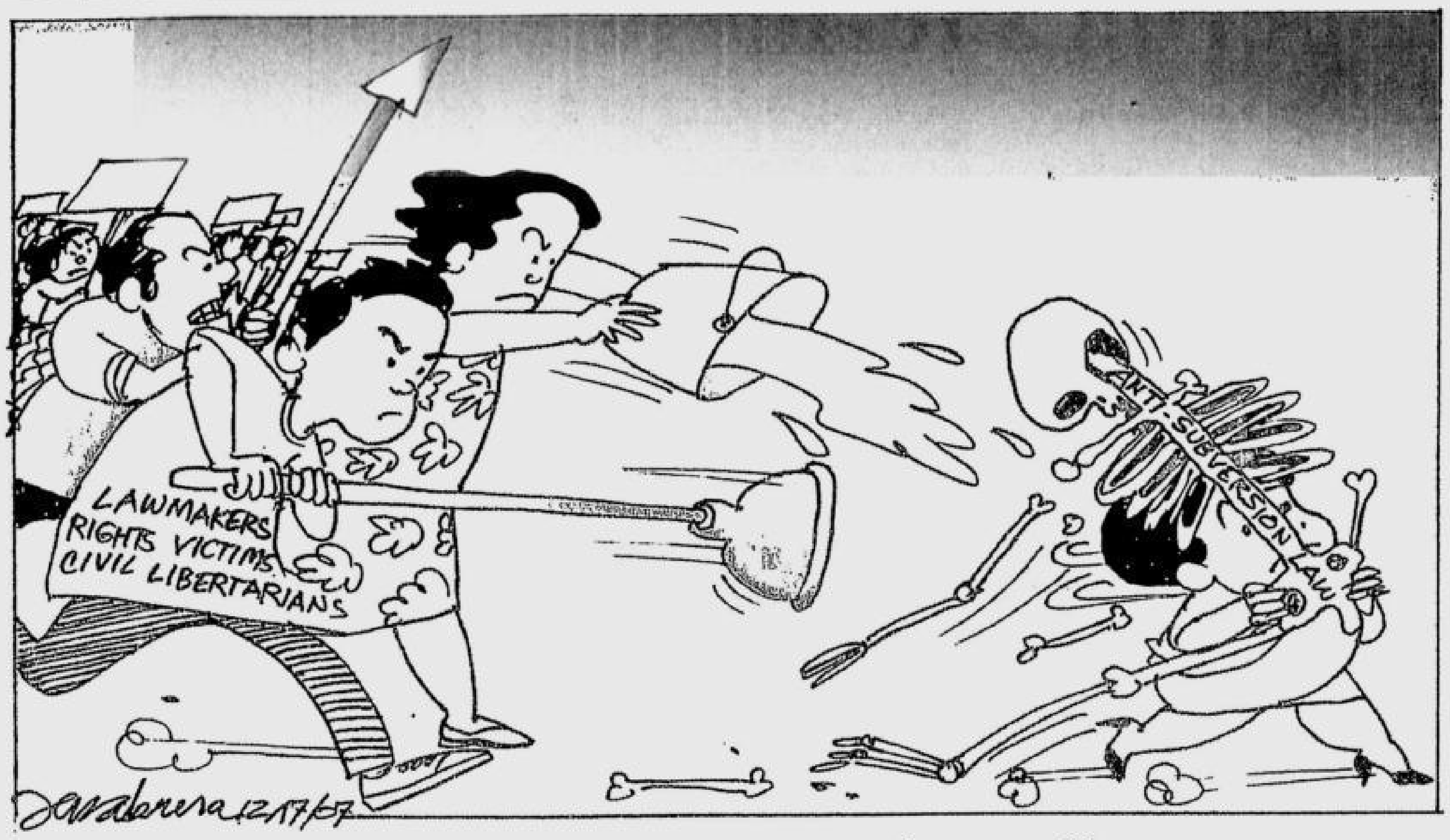

Mirror, mirror on the wall

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

MALACAÑANG HAS UNLEASHED DOUBLE-barreled attacks on Pulse Asia for its recent survey showing that President Macapagal-Arroyo is the "most corrupt" president the Philippines ever had. Much ado about nothing. Whatever Malacañang's running dogs say, the people's opinion will remain the same: She is the most.

In the first place, the people already know what the survey only made official. Ask your friends, relatives, neighbors, officemates, copassengers in jeepneys and buses, and even total strangers: Who is the most corrupt president of the Philippines? The answer will invariably be: GMA. She is the only President caught distributing half-million-peso bribes to congressmen and governors right in Malacañang. While she did not hand out the money herself, do you think her subalterns would do such a thing without her knowledge and approval? Did she scold anybody for desecrating the presidential palace with bribery? She did not. Do you believe that song-and-dance stories of her subalterns about where the money came from? Do you believe the tall tale that the congressmen in her entourage to Europe paid their own way? Ha, ha, ha!

GMA and her minions should face the truth: She is really world class in that category. She should be in the Guinness Book of World Records.

* * *

Speaking of bribery, we should discontinue the Sangguniang Kabataan elections. It only teaches our young people corruption at an early age. Imagine what they will do when they become adults. And in the first place, it was copied by Marcos from wartime Germany's Hitler Youth.

Here is one case that has reached the courts, that of John Russell Benedict Ibay, 17, SK chair of Barangay 765, Zone 83, District 5 of Manila, who is being accused of corruption. Last Dec. 6, the elections of the SK Federation were held and Ibay obtained the highest number of votes for president. As federation president, he will become an ex-officio member of the city council. Ibay is the son of three-term Councilor Ric Ibay who lost in the last congressional elections of his district.

The younger Ibay has been accused by other SK chairmen of bribery in the SK Federation elections and have asked the court to prevent his membership in the city council. The court has issued a temporary restraining order until the oral arguments today.

According to his accusers headed by Klarence Atutubo Camposano, they and other SK chairmen were invited to a meeting at Max Restaurant on Nov. 23, 2007, sponsored by Ibay, concerning the coming SK-Manila chapter election. In that meeting, they were served a sumptuous meal and each one handed an envelope containing P500.

A day before the Dec. 6, 2007 SK Federation elections, they were again invited by Ibay to a meeting, this time at the Aristocrat Restaurant, where they were treated to a hearty dinner, after which they were invited for an overnight stay in a motel allegedly for a meeting.

In the motel (not hotel), they were divided into groups of five to six persons to a room where they were not allowed to go out. At around 2 to 3 a.m., two middle-aged females entered each room and again distributed envelopes containing P1,000 allegedly for food expenses during the SK elections but insidiously in exchange for voting for Ibay in the SK elections that same day. Around 5 a.m., they were allowed to leave.

In the election, Ibay was proclaimed by the Department of Interior and Local Government as federation president.

Appalled by the deceitful tactics of Ibay and his staff, a number of SK chairmen went to City Hall and divulged to authorities the bribery that attended the SK elections; Mayor Alfredo Lim ordered an investigation.

The investigation found that the signature of DILG Director Camilo Borja on the notice of meeting was forged. Lim ordered the Manila Police District to investigate further. The police reported:

John Russell Ibay may be liable for violation of the Anti-Graft Practices Act, and for serious illegal detention.

The SK chairmen petitioned the DILG to annul the election of Ibay as federation president. The city legal officer wrote Vice Mayor Francisco Domagoso, presiding officer of the city council, to postpone Ibay's oath-taking as ex-officio member of the council, but Domagoso went ahead with the oath-taking last Dec. 13 to preempt the court hearing on Dec. 17.

Question: Has Ibay's accreditation to the city council rendered the complaint against him moot and academic?

Answer: The Supreme Court has ruled in previous cases that an act done in bad faith to preempt a forthcoming ruling or order is null and void.

Question: Is Ibay worthy to be president of the SK Federation and member of the city council?

Answer: No.

Question: Should we continue the SK elections and corrupt our young people?

Answer: We may be creating a generation of leaders who belong to the class described by the epithet thrown by Mayor Arsenio Lacson at a former Manila councilor: "So young, so corrupt."

* * *

Why is the National Power Corp. and its president, Cyril del Callar, being attacked for the bidding for Napocor assets?

Napocor has nothing to do at all with the biddings. Two independent entities are handling the disposal or bidding of Napocor assets: PSALM for the generation plants and Transco for the transmission lines.

Are the attacks an attempt to obfuscate the issues in the congressional effort to amend the Epira law, which is at present anomalously crafted to benefit certain vested interests? They are being attacked without letup. Why?

Dysfunctional

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

ON TUESDAY LAST WEEK, OUR HEADLINE said, "GMA slammed for slays." The story had to do with Edita Burgos and the kin of other victims of "salvaging" and forced disappearances laying the blame for the crimes on GMA. The day before, Monday, was International Human Rights Day, and they used the occasion to make their grievances known before the world. They cited the final report of Philip Alston, released earlier this month, which identified the military as the main perpetrator of the killings.

Next day, Wednesday, our headline read, "GMA most corrupt president, says poll." The story had to do with a Pulse Asia survey that showed that in the eyes of most Filipinos, GMA is the most corrupt president in Philippine history. More than Corazon Aquino (deemed the least corrupt), more than Fidel Ramos, and more than even Erap. Indeed, more than Marcos himself.

What is startling about this is **not** the revelations themselves—though the one coming on top of the other does drive home the point about the extent of the decomposition of the corpse. And though the Pulse Asia survey does add blacker hues to a portrait of evil, particularly the part about GMA being more crooked than Marcos. That is a feat in itself, exceeding even martial law's capacity for rapacity.

But these things are not new; despite the fresh nuances, they are well known. The abduction of Jonas Burgos is so patently the handiwork of the military it can't fool even the blind. And from the start, Alston, the "muchacho" of the UN, as Raul Gonzalez once referred to him, had been pointing to the military as the source of the killings.

Just as well, PERC made an even worse accusation earlier this year, calling the GMA government the most corrupt in Asia. Quite incidentally, Malacañang responded to that by saying that it was done by people sympathetic to the opposition. Its current response to the Pulse Asia survey is a variation thereof: It was commissioned by the opposition, notably by Serge Osmeña. An idiotic argument, given that it has passed off surveys it has itself commissioned and that have produced findings favorable to it as gospel truth. I leave Pepe Miranda to answer the suggestion his group is susceptible to distorting reality to fit the desires of those who commission it.

But like I said, what is startling is not the revelations themselves. What is startling is the blitheness with which we are able to take these revelations. What is startling is the ease with which the GMA government is able to get away with them.

Elsewhere in the world, the public perception that a government is the most corrupt in history and that it is employing systematic murder to carry out its agenda is enough to undo it. Just one or the other is enough for leaders to be dragged to court to answer for their crimes. Here, nothing. By weekend last week, those two shrill headlines had been pretty much forgotten. The revelations might as well not have been revealed at all.

There is a point when faced by a spectacle like this that you have to see that the problem no longer lies with government but with the citizens themselves. There is a point when faced by an absurdity like this that you no longer have to blame government but the citizens themselves. That a government should reach these levels of monstrosity is breathtaking enough. That the citizens should do nothing about it—that is where the real sickness lies.

An American senator once said out of frustration at our inability to end Marcos' rule that we were a nation of one SOB and 40 million cowards. What has changed since then is not just the fact that the 40 million has become 85 million or so. What has changed since then is that the cowards have become zombies.

Cowardice is based on fear. During Marcos' time, the reluctance of the citizens to defy martial law, or openly express their detestation of it, came from being afraid of martial law. If I recall right, the locals retorted to being described as cowards by calling the Filipino expatriates in the United States "steak commandos": Easy to be brave when the only thing threatening your life is cholesterol.

That the citizens have been free to express their contempt for this government in surveys and in various public forums must suggest that fear is not the factor governing their inability to end the thing they are contemptuous about. It is something else, something more debilitating, something more frightening. It is not in fact inability, it is unwillingness. It is not in fact powerlessness, it is disinterestedness.

I don't know where it's coming from, though one of the reactions to the Trillanes mutiny, which is that the regime has only two and half years to go, why bother cutting it short when we can get rid of it without effort, might hold some clues to it. It's a dangerous attitude not just because one day more of unprecedented murder and pillage, not to speak of two and half years of them, is totally unacceptable in any democracy, but because it begs the question of why a regime tolerated thus will agree to go at the end of its term. Ask yourself if the most corrupt president in Philippine history—the only thing controversial there being the word "president," the corruption including the theft of the vote and not just of money—will want to be vulnerable to the same fate, or worse, that befell her predecessor.

But whatever the reason, what all this indicts in the end is not just government, it is the nation. What all this shows is not just the mind-boggling spectacle of a government that has attained unprecedented levels of evil but a citizenry that is aware of it but is perfectly willing to abide it.

There and then you realize it's not just this government that is dysfunctional, this whole country is.

A golden opportunity for GMA

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

ONE OF THE PRINCIPLES WHICH FIRST-YEAR law students learn early is what is called the "doctrine of qualified political agency." The doctrine, recognizing that the Constitution has established a single and not a plural executive, postulates that "all executive and administrative organizations are adjuncts of the Executive Department, the heads of the various executive departments are assistants and agents of the Chief Executive, and, except in cases where the Chief Executive is required by the Constitution or law to act in person or the exigencies of the situation demand that he act personally, the multifarious executive and administrative functions of the Chief Executive are performed by and through the executive departments, and **the acts of the secretaries of such departments, performed and promulgated in the regular course of business, are, unless disapproved or reprobated by the Chief Executive, presumptively the acts of the Chief Executive.**"

Pardon the involved kilometric sentence, but, put simply, when a department secretary makes a decision in the course of performing his or her official duties, the decision, whether honorable or disgraceful, is presumptively the decision of the President, unless she quickly and clearly disowns it. Thus, a decision of a department secretary, when not reprobated by the Executive, is the last step in the process of "exhausting administrative remedies."

Why is this so? Justice Jose P. Laurel put it simply long ago, saying that in our presidential system the President is "the Executive of the Government of the Philippines, and no other [is]. The heads of the executive departments occupy political positions and hold office in an advisory capacity, and, in the language of Thomas Jefferson 'should be of the President's bosom confidence,' and, in the language of Attorney General Cushing, 'are subject to the direction of the President.'"

We must assume that Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman is of the "President's bosom confidence."

In other words, the President cannot distance herself from decisions of her secretary. Unless she reprobates a bad decision, the only effective way she can distance herself from it is by resignation. But even if she does, she will be haunted to her grave by her complicity.

Now comes the big part. The secretary of agrarian reform has just made an utterly disgraceful decision in the case involving the farmers of Bukidnon. He has refused to read the law and the rules promulgated by the department itself. You can read the law and rules backward and forward and you will reach the conclusion that the secretary is wrong. He has uttered a decision commanding the farmers to accept an unlawful act and authorizing San Miguel Foods to proceed with unauthorized conversion of the farm land. The land had been previously awarded to the farmers under the Agrarian Reform Law. True it is that the award was taken back, but under a highly controversial conversion order which went through the Supreme Court three times.

But the controversial conversion decision had a saving grace. It commanded in detail how the conversion should be done: the farm land should be converted into a virtual paradise.

The law says that if the conversion is not done the way it was commanded, the conversion should be revoked.

The Quisumbings had five years to prove that their petition for conversion was not a ruse to hoodwink the Department of Agrarian Reform, President Fidel Ramos and the farmers. But they did nothing to prove their sincerity. Instead, they sold the property to San Miguel Foods.

The law says that a successor in interest to the converted property must follow the terms of the conversion order. It taxes belief that San Miguel Foods did not know this condition. Nonetheless, San Miguel Foods chose to throw away the approved conversion plan and decided to convert the rich farm land into a piggery. From virtual paradise to piggery! The insult cries to high heavens for correction. Profession of good intentions will not right a continuing wrong.

But I have not given up. I see a ray of hope. Advent is a season of hope and hope is a virtue when the situation seems hopeless. It may be that Secretary Pangandaman is offering to the President a golden opportunity on a silver platter. He is offering to her the opportunity to prove that, yes, indeed, she is the champion of the rule of law.

Today the President meets with the farmers. She thus will correct the refusal of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita to give the farmers a chance to at least get a glimpse of the Malacañang gate after a foot-blistering 1,700-kilometer hike. More importantly, however, she will also get a chance to convert Pangandaman's dross into gold.

If she fails in this, it will be much more difficult to believe that she is serious when she speaks of the rule of law.

It is already difficult even now. I pray to God that I will be proved wrong.

White flags for Mahid

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

I NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET him, much less see him even in person. But the accounts I hear about him, from Muslims and Christians alike, are all singular: he was a man of peace.

What does it mean to be a man of peace? Perhaps the definitions would need some amending now, with the late Dr. Mahid M. Mutilan as the benchmark for those whose special advocacy is the attainment of peace in Mindanao and the transformation of social institutions that are necessary for that attainment.

In a certain sense, Mahid Mutilan was not a national figure. He was not your kind of national celebrity who would easily land on the pages of our national dailies most of the time out of notoriety rather than popularity. His face and his voice were not the type to have been made a *suki* of network talk shows, as others are nowadays in the most pathetic sense. And that is where our Manila-based media have missed out on a man who would have deserved, if not national adulation, then at the very least national respect.

Mahid Mutilan was probably the most respectably dignified Moro leader of contemporary times. In life and in politics, he had only one focus, and that was always Mindanao peace. But it was not the kind of peace that many espouse so easily and cheaply from a set of platitudes that too often gets lost among the inanities that we are now so accustomed to. His was the kind of peace that was born out of faith, and then overflows into service for humanity. Among Christians, in fact, this should be the kind of peace that one aspires for, first in the heart, and then for society. But because Mutilan was a Muslim, he has put many of us to shame.

An aleem or Islamic scholar, Mutilan had graduated from his masteral and doctoral studies in theology at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. He had spent 11 years as a missionary to Japan before returning to Lanao del Sur. By way of his charisma that was born out of a deep religious faith, he was able to convince his fellow ulama to found the Ulama League. Later joining hands with Bishop Fernando Capalla, then the bishop of Iligan and the Prelature of St. Mary's in Marawi, they founded together the Bishops-Ulama Forum that has given Mindanao an interfaith perspective—and most importantly a voice—in attaining that elusive peace for Mindanao. Through the BUF, government's attention was called to peace efforts in many of the war-torn zones of Mindanao. Always, it was their call for ceasefires and a return to the negotiation table that was heard in Manila.

Because of a respectability that he had gained out of his deep and genuine concern, he was prodded upon to run as city mayor of Marawi during the Aquino presidency. It was during this time that he founded the Ompia party in a most untraditional way even for Moro politics—it was composed mostly of ulama. During the vote counting, Mutilan's votes were safely guarded by ulama and Muslim women's groups. His grassroots campaign had something that was probably unheard of in the elitist-dominated and often volatile politics of Lanao del Sur. For campaign funds, he relied on contributions in coins passed around in jars by faithful supporters. He became the first ulama ever elected to a government position. After three terms, he ran and won as governor of Lanao del Sur.

Later, as vice governor and concurrent education secretary of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, his focus was to strengthen the madrasah system of education. He was bent on getting international support for what was then an Islamic institution languishing from government inattention. For Mutilan, the madrasah was a potent catalyst for peace and development in Mindanao. His efforts resulted in the madrasah as an object of development efforts becoming a key component of the 1996 peace agreement between government and the Moro National Liberation Front.

At the height of his consistent advocacy, Mutilan gained friends among the bishops not just of the Catholic church in Mindanao but also among the Protestant bishops who saw in his peace call a true Islamic voice of partnership and solidarity for their own advocacies for the region. That in itself was a measure of the kind of man Mutilan was. I imagine many of his friends in the Christian churches are now mourning his passing. Perhaps there were those who had expected Mutilan to retire from his peace efforts after he had gone to the ARMM. Of course, that was not to be so. One does not, should not, retire from the faith.

Last Dec. 6, Mahid Mutilan was on his way to Cagayan de Oro to catch a flight to Manila. Earlier, he had attended a meeting of the BUF where he had said that the "Mindanao problem must be solved in our time rather than pass it on to the next generation." But on that day, he wanted to bid farewell to his wife, Aleema Khadija Mutilan, who was on her way to the hajj in Mecca. Traversing the Misamis Oriental highway at early dawn for the morning flight to Manila, Mutilan's car skidded and lost control. The aleem had met his tragedy. Fellow Muslims mourned. Allah's ways are sometimes incomprehensible.

On the day of his burial, the scenic road that leads to the Islamic City of Marawi was festooned on both sides by white flags. "The people of Marawi are in mourning," my fellow traveler who was M'ranao said when we visited Marawi just two days after the burial. The flags were still there. They were mourning for Mahid. The powerful voice of tolerance and pluralism was no more. Who will take up the cudgels for interfaith dialogue, many are now asking? I believe that after Mahid Mutilan, there will be many.

* * *

Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

Points of unity

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN HIS "TESTAMENT FROM A PRISON CELL," Ninoy Aquino wrote, "Our people, especially the youth, seem to be sinking even deeper into apolitical torpor. Far from welcoming the detachment of the young from social activism, we should take this as a terrible omen of a bleak future."

He went on to say that "We must encourage the young to rise above a society that has been apathetic and indifferent, and where justice has been long ignored. We must teach the young how to construct arguments, organize their thoughts, and turn their insights into ideals. They must develop true intellectual discipline and learn the meaning of moral courage."

And he identified the best that elders can do for coming generations: "They [the young] must acquire the moral fiber to support an indomitable will! All of us must resolve to be true leaders who will reflect in the clearest way the aspirations of our people."

The problem is that the leaders have come to see that they no longer appeal to the higher instincts of the public. A cynical public breeds cynicism among the rulers, too: and cynicism stiffens the resolve to brook no opposition on the principle that, if no one believes you anyway, it's best to focus on results, regardless of how they're achieved.

I once asked a columnist from another paper, who is a staunch defender of the administration, what he thought the prospects for reconciliation between the administration and its critics might be. He laughed and essentially said, not a chance, the administration has no real interest in unity. Then again, the same could be said of the President's critics.

But I do think administration defenders have a point when they say the President shouldn't be the be-all and end-all of things, and that the problems of the country go beyond the political fate of any one person. This is not an opinion held only by the administration's defenders, I think it's one widely held by the public.

Still, the first move's been made—by an administration supporter. Last week, Marikina Mayor Marides Fernando invited me to have a chat about a project she has in mind. She recounted that it began with a meeting by prominent Filipinos with Harry Lee, alias Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's dynastic minister-mentor.

Sitting at the feet of Minister-Mentor Lee, the Filipinos were suitably pleased to receive pearls of wisdom. Mainly businessmen, they asked: How can they contribute to nation-building?

Lee said, "you must join the fray." It was not enough to pay taxes, or to preside over large firms, he said. They had to engage in governance, be part of the government, and not abandon the field to the politicians.

The Filipinos gasped.

They then asked him about fighting corruption.

Said the oracular Lee: "Where there are no queues, there is no corruption."

The Filipinos gasped, again.

But Fernando pondered something she noticed, even as she welcomed the buzz among her countrymen after their audience with the Singaporean strongman. There was, she felt, tremendous enthusiasm, enormous concern, but little agreement on how to go about being part of the solution instead of contributing to the nation's problems.

And she hit upon the reason there was vigorous debate but little consensus: even among the best-educated and entirely well-meaning members of her delegation, there was, she felt, a depressing lack of knowledge as to how government here at home really works.

And so she's embarking on a program to explain the basics, in terms of our national and local governments, to businessmen.

Her story made me recount, in turn, something I've noticed, too.

I do know that both defenders and detractors of the administration have a common problem, when it comes to proposals for political reform: the increasing absence of what I've previously called a common political vocabulary. We may all like to screech about freedom and so forth, but when you get down to basics, it seems to me you'll hardly find a basis for a common understanding of what the word means (or democracy, or checks and balances). And the same difficulty applies to the institutions of our government, how they work, and not just the rights, but the obligations of officials and the citizenry.

I don't think I'm alone in being extremely concerned with the problem that even if we do manage to have an election in 2010, instead of finally making progress possible, we'll just move on to another round of squabbling. So indeed, let's ask, how can we put the present behind us, and move toward something better?

It begins with what Mayor Fernando's resolved to do. Restore an understanding of the parameters of government. The powers different branches have, and also, the limits on those powers; and how the governors and the governed have obligations as much as rights.

We can debate things until the carabaos end up tender, juicy hotdogs or corned beef, but if no one's on the same page to start with, debate is useless.

We also ought to pursue points of agreement that are possible, now. Both sides of the political divide can agree, I think, that the "stock knowledge" we take for granted among politically engaged people no longer exists when it comes to the broader public. It is like the perennial appeal for a return to "delicadeza"—when was this informal code ever consciously transmitted, much less understood, even by officialdom?

And so, Inday Espina-Varona writes in her Philippine Graphic column, "The young agree about hell lying in wait. But they think the solution lies elsewhere: Collective tinkering with a wheezing vehicle, the dismantling of roadblocks and a more discerning choice of routes. These acts require sober dialogue, not the hissy fits coming from all shades of the political spectrum these days." So we must ask ourselves, how well do we understand the engine we intend to tinker with?

A future leader of our nation

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

TODAY IS THE 96TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MY mother-in-law, Mary Morales Joaquin. She also passed away on the same day—Dec. 17, 17 years ago. The standing joke in the family was that we were never too sure about her age since at some point in her exciting and exhilarating life, she stopped counting in order to continue serving in government long after her sunset years had passed.

Mary Morales Joaquin was the eldest child of Eusebio Morales of the once politically powerful Morales clan of Moncada, Tarlac. There were three Morales brothers: Luis, the eldest, served as assemblyman, governor and later, senator of the province. Filadelfo would become the first municipal doctor of the town of Paniqui where he established a reputation as a strict disciplinarian but one with a generous heart for the poor. The youngest boy, Eusebio, would be sent to England for college studies where he was placed under the care of Fred Allden, an English headmaster for a school for boys. "Sebio" Morales would return home with an engineering diploma and an English bride, Frances Allden, a niece of Fred Allden. In accepting his marriage proposal in the face of family concerns about living with "those" people, Frances Allden would admonish them, saying "if they are his people, then they must be fine and wonderful folks."

Exactly a century after, their great-grandson and the grandson of Mary Morales Joaquin, Victor Paz, would take up post-graduate work at Cambridge University in England and return home with a doctorate in archeology along with a lovely English bride, Lisa Goddard. Victor is presently the director of the Archeological Studies Program at the University of the Philippines.

The Golden Girl of Philippine Archery, Amaya Paz, who recently won individual gold at the Southeast Asian Games in Thailand, is a great-granddaughter of Mary Morales Joaquin.

Yesterday members of the Morales and Joaquin families gathered to mark the double anniversary of a wonderful lady who, in her own inimitable manner, added spice and laughter to our lives.

* * *

As I mentioned in my last column, the Philippine Air Force Flying School class of 1957 marked its golden anniversary last week with a simple gathering of classmates and flight instructors at Julie Gamboa's Milky Way.

Before I introduced the guest of honor to the group, I narrated some of the more important events that took place 50 years ago:

At 1:15 on a Sunday morning in March 1957, Ramon Magsaysay, the most beloved President of our Republic, died in the crash of the presidential plane on the slopes of Mt. Manunggal in Cebu. His plane, the "Mt. Pinatubo," an old, refurbished C-47, was named by him for the highest peak in his native province of Zambales where in his words, "we hid and fought as guerrillas during the Japanese occupation."

I recall that when word was out on the missing plane, our world came to a standstill. Fernando Air Base became quiet and the mood turned somber as we waited for developments. When the fatal crash was finally confirmed, we all felt a sense of deep loss not only for ourselves but for the nation as well.

Also in March 1957, Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaida, was born in Saudi Arabia of billionaire parents in the construction business. He is the prime suspect in the September 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, an event which changed our lives completely, in particular, how we travel by air.

In August 1957, the Federation of Malaysia gained independence from the United Kingdom with Tungku Abdul Rahman serving as its first prime minister.

In October 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the first artificial satellite to orbit the earth. At the same time, the United States sustained its first combat loss in Vietnam.

In November 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik II, with the first animal in space, a dog named "Laika." And in December, the first flight of the Boeing 707 airliner was made. It was the most advanced commercial jet at that time.

The Oscar for Best Picture of the Year went to "Bridge on the River Kwai." The most popular songs were "Love Letters in the Sand," sung by Pat Boone, and "Diana" by Paul Anka.

In 1957, the population of our planet was 2.8 billion. Today it is more than 6 billion.

But the most important event of the year was the graduation in December of nine student officers and eight aviation cadets of the PAF Flying School.

I then proceeded with my introduction.

Seven years after our graduation, a boy was born to Gilberto Teodoro Sr. and Mercedes Cojuangco. Gilberto Teodoro Jr., would finish at La Salle University with a commerce degree, majoring in financial institutions. This was followed by law studies at the UP College of Law where he would be awarded the Dean's Medal for academic excellence. After graduation, he would top the Philippine Bar exams.

Teodoro would move on to Harvard for his Master's in law and admission to the bar of the State of New York.

His political career would take him to three terms in Congress as the representative of the First District of Tarlac, serving as head of the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) in the House.

Aside from being a licensed commercial pilot, Teodoro finished the Command and Staff course at the Philippine Air Force, and later attended the Joint Command and Staff College of the AFP. He is perhaps one of the very few legislators to have undergone both courses, an education which has clearly prepared him for his current responsibilities.

Today the boy who was born seven years after our graduation is, at 43, the youngest person to serve as secretary of national defense. It would be difficult to eschew the thought that we have in our midst, a future President of the Republic, much like a former defense secretary who in his time restored the faith of our people in the Armed Forces and gave us hope and confidence in the future of our country.

* * *

For all the family wealth and pedigree he enjoys, Gilberto Teodoro Jr. has the character and sense of humility that would allow him to unite rather than divide our people. That was my reading of the man from the brief meeting I had with him and from listening to his remarks before our group.

I have no doubt he is destined for a leadership role in the life of our nation, perhaps not in my lifetime but certainly in the challenging years of a not too distant future.

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'VIP' convoys' arrogant drivers

I READ WITH INTEREST THE STORY about the police officer who fired at the vehicle of former Gov. Josefina "Josie" dela Cruz and mauled the driver. Without a doubt, this reckless cop should be punished with the full force of the law. He deserves not only to lose his job but also to serve time in jail for his criminal act.

But as I continued reading the story, this portion caught my attention: "Eduardo Magsakay, the driver of the Nissan Safari which served as a backup vehicle to De la Cruz's vehicle, told the police that Jethro Lim, who was driving a Toyota Corolla, tried to get ahead of the convoy. Magsakay said he tried to stop Lim from overtaking the convoy—a standard security measure for VIPs—by driving close to the Corolla and nearly sideswiping it, a move, he admitted, that could have irked the policeman."

Last I checked, roads were public property, with every licensed driver having equal right to them. What is it that gives government officials the idea that they, more than others, should be given the privilege of enjoying a larger space of the road?

Last Nov. 5, I was nearly sideswiped by a Toyota Revo with license plate XPP 259 on Commonwealth Avenue. The Revo was being escorted by a policeman on a motorcycle but was moving quite slowly, so I tried to overtake it on its left side. Just as I was drawing even, the driver suddenly swerved left and almost hit the passenger side of my car where my wife was seated. I instinctively blasted my horn, and the Revo responded by sounding a siren (which, I understand, is illegal in non-emergency vehicles). Since when has it been illegal to overtake a "VIP" convoy?

I can understand the need to take security measures should an unknown vehicle try to cut into a convoy, but what's wrong with simply overtaking it? Dela Cruz's driver apparently felt that he had the right to prevent Lim's car from overtaking. Why? Did he perceive Lim's maneuver as threatening? Or was his act simply a manifestation of the illusion of self-importance a lackey often harbors as a result of his being attached to an influential figure? How many Filipino drivers have been victimized by siren-blaring vehicles of senators, congressmen, mayors, etc.? Aren't these convoys illegal in the first place? Why are the powers-that-be doing nothing as the law is being broken in such a visible and noisy manner? There are few proofs better than this that show that the rich and powerful in the Philippines are exempt from following the law.

Lim's act was inexcusable, and he should definitely be punished. But the authorities should not stop there; they should also look into what may have triggered that act. There are few drivers on the road more arrogant or more reckless than those leading "VIP" convoys. How much longer must the ordinary Filipino driver put up with them?

—GERRY LOS BAÑOS,
University of the
Philippines Press,
UP Diliman, Quezon City

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Teachers cheat by not teaching

COMMENT ON THE LETTER TItled "Teaching sideline." (INQUIRER, 11/29/07) It's a shame for a professor to sell raffle tickets that are no longer valid, but it is a lot more frustrating to see a professor who does not teach in class. We students expect professors to teach us the subject for which we enrolled. And we expect to learn from them. But I have had a very arrogant professor who did not teach us. All he would tell us was his personal life. It was so frustrating that after the semester all we learned from him was just about his adventures abroad and his family.

I also have a professor who just asks us to sing and does not even deal with the subject that we are studying. And the subject is very important to our field of specialty. Imagine how much of our parents' money and our time this kind of professors are wasting.

Education is a right and professors should not play with it. A student is punished for cheating. I believe that a teacher should also be punished for not teaching.

—GERALD P. MESINA,
geirou@yahoo.com

Bichara hits envoy's 'squid tactics'

THIS REFERS TO THE LETTER OF Mariano A. Dumia, the incumbent chargé d'affaires of our embassy in Lebanon. (INQUIRER 12/11/07)

Instead of answering squarely the issues raised against him, Dumia resorted to character assassination by innuendo and hearsay. Instead of justifying his actions, he let loose a barrage of unfounded, baseless and malicious accusations against my person.

1. I do not have any personal animosity against him. I do not know him personally, neither have I met him in person. I made my privilege speech because of the numerous written complaints sent to me by overseas Filipino workers in Lebanon. As a former ambassador to Lebanon and now a member of Congress, I can't just close my eyes to the plight of OFWs, more so after I learned they were being harassed by Dumia.

2. Dumia alleged, without any basis, that the sources of my speech were three embassy personnel, one of whom worked under me. This betrays Dumia's paranoia and explains his witch-hunting tactics against his immediate staff and our OFWs in Lebanon. With his present mental state, it is not surprising that he enlisted the Internal Security Force of Lebanon to investigate his very own subordinates. In fact, he admitted that intelligence authorities of Lebanon attempted to investigate our own country's vice consul and his sister, not only once, but thrice.

3. Dumia wrote about responsibility and fairness. Yet, he accused me of owning a car which, according to him, is not even registered under my name. Worse, there is nothing, except hearsay and conjecture, to back his allegation that I own the car. He also claimed, without having met me, to know my state of mind, accusing me of being "very angry" with him.

4. Dumia accused me of paying $10,928 for a distressed OFW way back in March 2006 and tried to mislead the public about the circumstances of this OFW who was suffering from severe mental illness. Prior to my assumption as ambassador, the embassy tried several times to repatriate her but she always violently and hysterically refused to board a plane. It came to a point that no airline would take her as a passenger. So the embassy had to look for an airline that would board her.

As it was, the airline which took her required that she be restrained on a stretcher. The airline removed at least four seats of the airplane to accommodate her. She was also accompanied by one embassy personnel to Manila. The cost of $10,928 covered not only the travel tickets but also the hospitalization expense for the OFW. The tedious process of repatriating the OFW, including the expenses incurred when I was not yet the ambassador, has been properly documented but Dumia conveniently chose not to mention this.

Finally, I am saddened that our country's representative to Lebanon has to employ squid tactics just to divert public attention from the real issues raised by OFWs against him.

—REP. AL FRANCIS C. BICHARA,
Second District, Albay

GSIS: Gracia missed Garcia's gains

IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE FLEETing acclaim for columnist Solita Monsod, Rowena Therese Gracia acknowledged her longstanding crusade against GSIS president and general manager Winston F. Garcia. ("Monsod's 'return' hailed," INQUIRER, 12/12/07)

Gracia praised the columnist for what she perceived as a complementing "support" to her crusade, calling it "fearless journalism," only to insinuate later that Monsod's effort dwindled with her subsequent "silence." But Gracia failed to recognize that Monsod worked and went out of her way to help the GSIS address some members' concerns coursed through her office.

Gracia, as she herself admitted, is a dismissed GSIS employee. Her dismissal from public service was ordered not because she expressed her grievances against Garcia and his policies. It was based on the cases filed against her for her penchant to put her personal needs, in the guise of her right to free speech, before her responsibility to deliver genuine public service.

It is just unfortunate that Gracia was unable to stay a little longer at the GSIS to see for herself the successes the institution has so far reaped following Garcia's reforms. She missed the unparalleled financial growth and stability the pension fund enjoys today under the leadership of the very person she sought to oust.

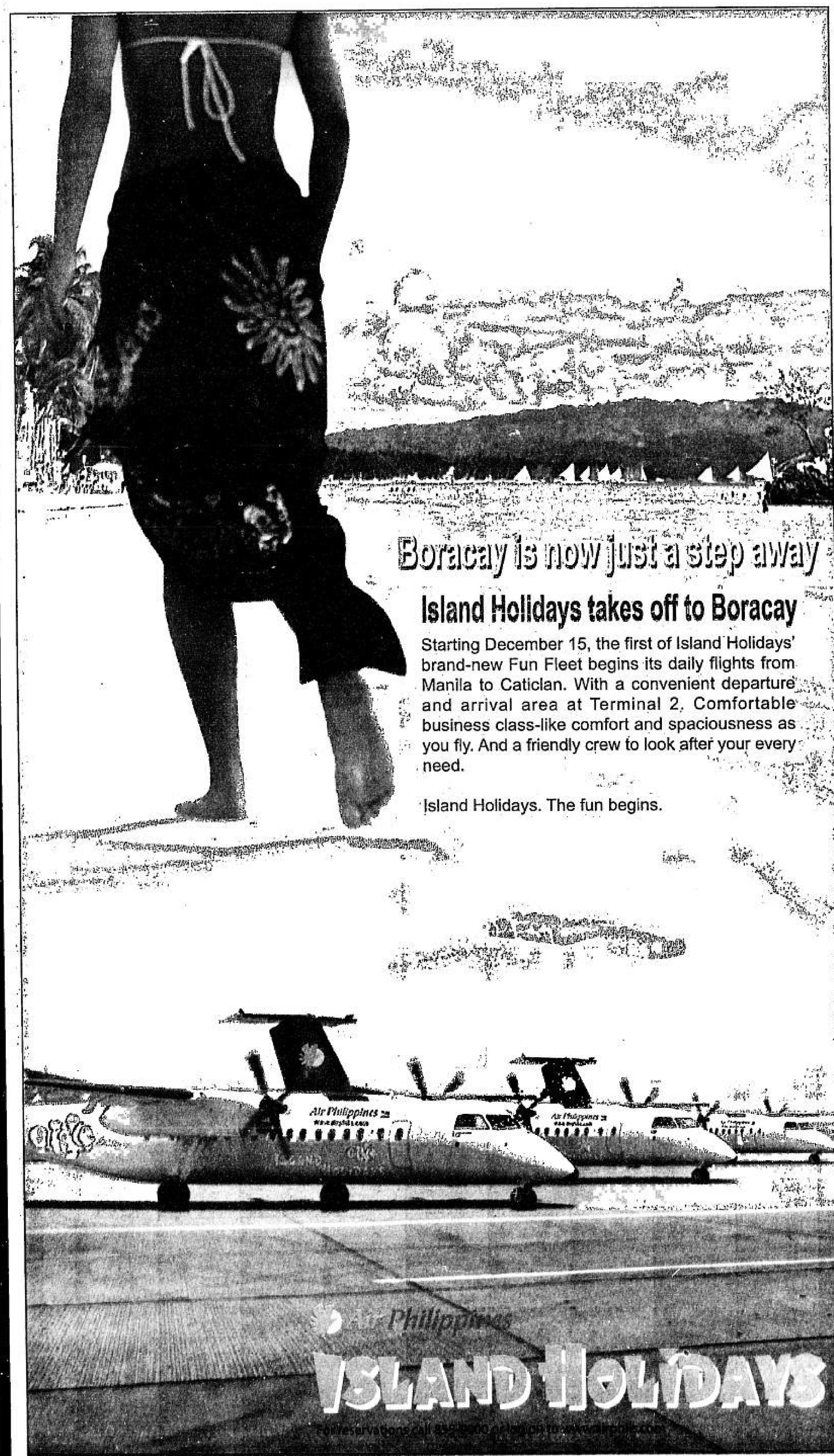
—ELLA E. VALENCERINA,
vice president,
Public Affairs Office,
Government Service
Insurance System

Pork barrel is public money

"DBM JUNKED P100-M PORK FOR Trillanes." (INQUIRER, 12/12/07) I believe Malacañang is wrong in not releasing Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV's pork barrel. The Palace should be reminded that the pork barrel is not a private resource to be disposed of as its officials wish.

The pork barrel comes from the taxpayers and is meant to benefit the whole Filipino nation, regardless of religious belief, color, creed and political affiliation.

—BENJAMIN JALECO,
boboy916@yahoo.com



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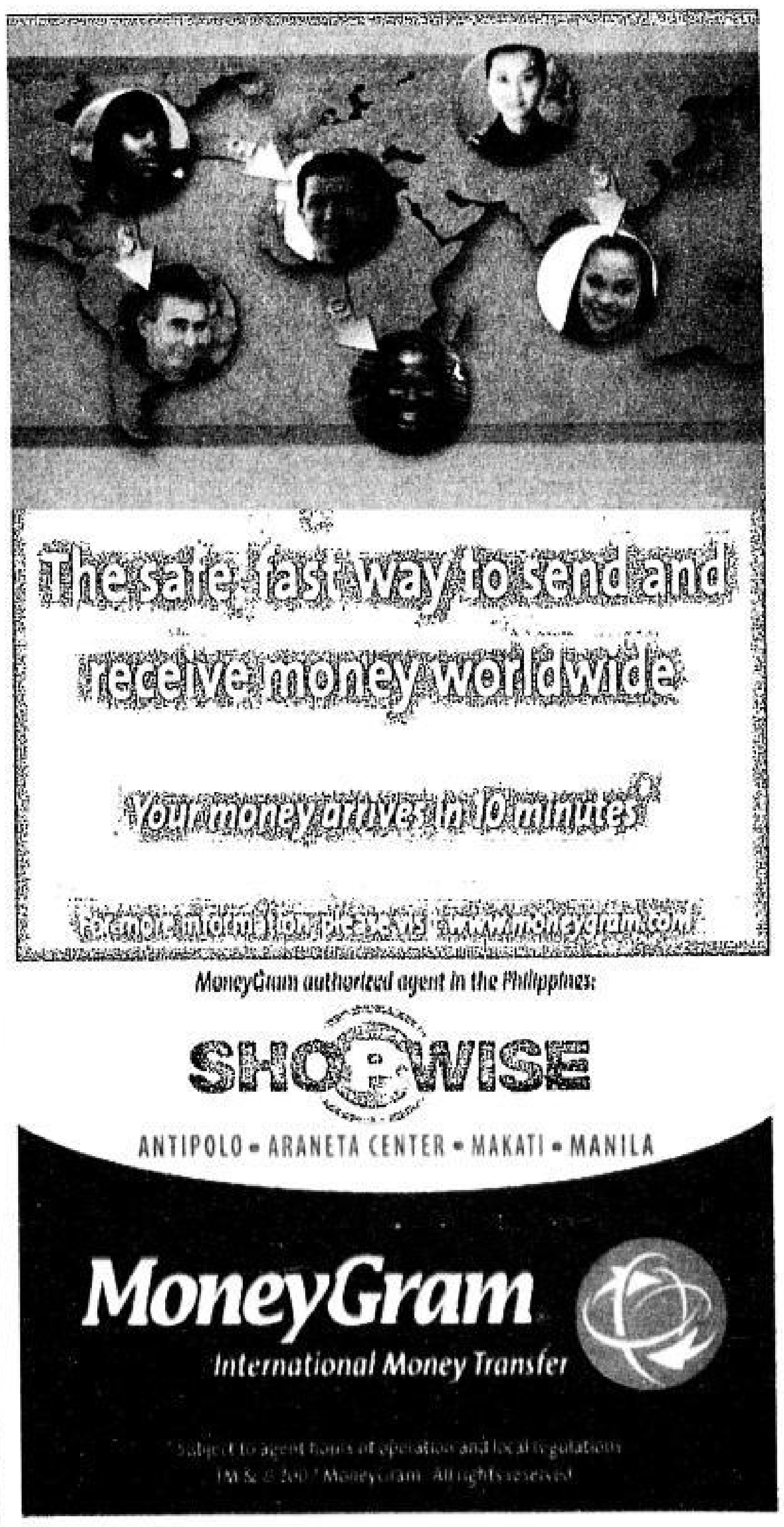
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Tan: Marcos crony who flourished

LUCIO TAN

OF ALL THE CRONIES OF THE LATE DICtator Ferdinand Marcos, Chinese-born tycoon Lucio Tan stands out as one of the most durable—and for that reason remarkable.

In the two decades since Marcos fled into exile following the People Power revolt in 1986, Tan has expanded a formidable empire in tobacco, beer, aviation and banking.

This makes him different from many associated with the Marcos era, whose empires faded away while his flourished.

And this despite losing some of his shareholdings to the government following the collapse of the Marcos regime.

Court battles

Despite allegations of being given favorable treatment by Marcos, Tan has managed to get back most of what he lost in court battles spanning nearly two decades.

The 71-year-old, who was born in China's Fujian province, savored his latest victory on Dec. 7 when the Supreme Court lifted the government's sequestration of Allied Bank, which Tan controls.

The court declared null and void an order by the Presidential Commission on Good Government for the sequestration of Tan's shares in Allied Bank, Fortune Tobacco Corp., Foremost Farms and Shareholdings Inc.

The PCGG is tasked with recovering the ill-gotten wealth of Marcos and his cronies.

Analysts and bank officials say the court's ruling paves the way for a merger between Allied Bank and another Tan-controlled bank, Philippine National Bank (PNB).

Merger

"The merger will probably happen next year," PNB president Omar Tyrone Mier told AFP, although he would not give details or a date.

Tan set up Allied Bank in 1977 and, while he only owns 13 percent personally, most of the remaining shares are held by close allies. It has a market capitalization of P10 billion.

PNB, once a government bank and formerly the country's largest commercial bank, was set up 91 years ago and privatized in 1989.

Tan now owns 67 percent of the bank, with the remainder largely held by foreign fund managers.

It has a market capitalization of about P30 billion, Mier said.

The PCGG says it will file a motion for reconsideration of the Supreme Court decision, but Mier said it was a "long shot" the ruling would be reversed.

Fourth largest bank

"Even with a motion for reconsideration, the merger will still take place next year," Mier said.

"We will not give up Allied Bank," said PCGG Commissioner Narciso Nario, stressing his agency would not cease its efforts to gain control of the bank.

Even when PNB and Allied Bank are merged into one, it would still be only the fourth largest bank in the Philippines, but Mier said increasing its size is necessary.

"In the banking industry, size matters. It means you have more muscle to expand your portfolio, your branches; your borrowing limit goes higher," he said.

Less competitive

He added that smaller banks were considering merging because they were becoming less competitive.

PNB and Allied Bank bring different qualities to the merger, said James Lago, research chief of Westlink Global Equities Inc.

PNB has a recognizable brand name and extensive network and background with the millions of Filipinos working overseas who use the bank to remit billions of dollars to their families back home.

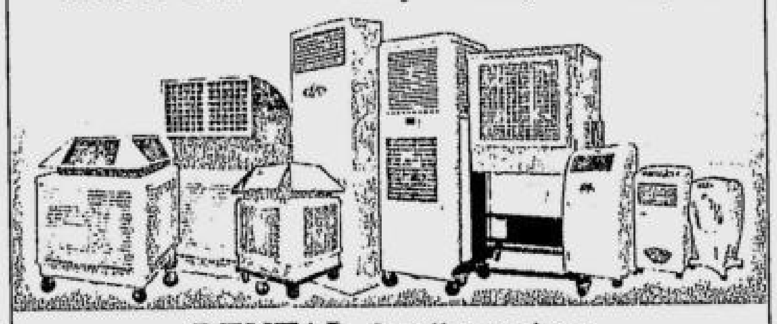
Extensive contacts

Allied Bank meanwhile has the accounts of Tan's companies as well as extensive contacts in the Chinese-Filipino business community, which is a major player in the country's retail, food processing and manufacturing sectors, said Lago.

But he warned that "the merger of different cultures of the two banks will take at least two years. There are two entrenched cultures there, especially at PNB."

With the heat on, some of the country's biggest banks are meanwhile considering new acquisitions to make themselves larger.

But as the wily Tan has demonstrated down the years, his durability is not in question. *AFP*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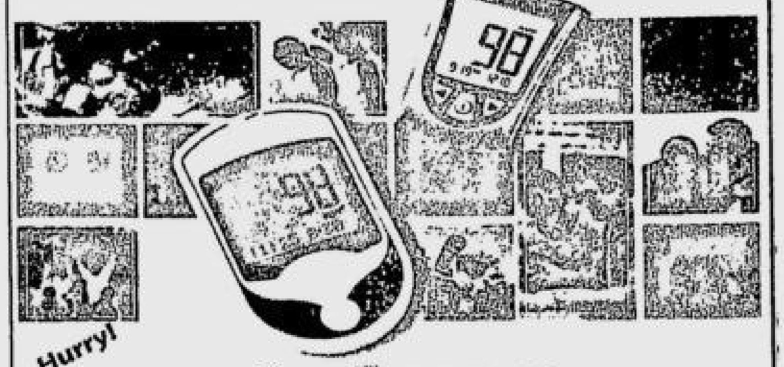
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**Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4157, Series of 2007.

Garcia gains critics, denies favoring drug firms on meds bill

WITH ONLY THREE session days left before Congress adjourns for the holidays, pressure is mounting on Cebu Rep. Pablo Garcia to step aside and allow the passage of a bill that promises lower medicine prices in the country.

Former Iloilo Rep. Rolex Suplico, author of the cheaper medicines bill in the 11th Congress, yesterday joined the growing number of Garcia critics, accusing the 81-year-old lawmaker of lobbying in behalf of giant pharmaceutical companies.

"(His) antics to destroy the cheaper medicines bill are a clear sign that he has become a medical representative of foreign multinational drug firms detailed at the lower house," Suplico, now Iloilo vice governor, said in a text message.

Sought for comment, Garcia yesterday said he was amenable to the passage of HB 2844, provided certain provisions purportedly favoring drug firms were either removed or amended.

"Maybe he doesn't understand the law or the bill," he told the INQUIRER by phone, referring to Suplico. "How can I be accused of favoring multinational drug companies when I want to remove or amend provisions that would benefit them?"

Importation

Garcia said he objected to the provision requiring a presidential declaration of national emergency as an additional requirement before the country could import lower-priced medicines.

He said the existing Intellectual Property Code allows either the government or an authorized third party to conduct "parallel importation" as a matter of "public interest."

Garcia said HB 2844 also requires a patent holder's consent before others could experiment on the subject of the patent, when the "experimentation process" is not covered by patent restrictions in the IPC.

"Now I ask, who's working for the interest of drug companies?" he said.

Last week, Majority Leader Arthur Defensor vowed no more "leniency" for Garcia, who had all but dominated plenary deliberations on HB 2844 for more than two weeks now. *Christian V. Esguerra*

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3 Marines killed in Palawan ambush

By Redempto Anda, *Inquirer Southern Luzon*
and Nikko Dizon *in Manila*

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—THREE PHILIPPINE Marines soldiers were killed in an early morning ambush launched by New People's Army rebels in Taytay town, northern Palawan, just hours after the government declared a unilateral ceasefire, took effect.

Western Command spokesperson Lt. Col. Jacinto de Vera told newsmen the ambush occurred at 7:30 a.m. Sunday at Sitio Kauban, Barangay Binga.

"The three soldiers were unarmed in observance of the Somo (suspension of offensive military operations) and were in civilian clothes to do marketing duties for their detachment when they were treacherously attacked," Wescom Commander Ruperto Rico Borromeo said.

The fatalities were two privates and a private first class from the Marine Battalion Landing Team (MBLT) 9, according to Navy spokesperson Lt. Col. Ariel Caculitan.

But the Western Command declined to release the names of the victims pending notification of their next of kin.

Caculitan said the soldiers were new recruits, two of whom were 26 years old and another, 27 years old.

Malacañang had announced Thursday the Somo, which took effect nationwide Sunday.

"It's sad that the good gesture of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) in the cessation of military operations was unheeded by the communist rebels," Caculitan said in a phone interview.

He said the Somo was a unilateral decision on the part of the government "on the premise that everyone wants to enjoy the spirit of Christmas… that we want to have a peaceful Christmas."

"As much as possible, we don't have massive operations," he said.

De Vera said about 20 armed men believed led by a certain Glenn dela Cruz (alias Glenn Silagan) were behind the ambush.

Caculitan said the soldiers were traveling on foot since the road from their detachment to the market was not accessible to vehicles.

Troops usually leave their firearms behind when they go to markets to avoid attracting attention, especially of enemies.

Military chief, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said last week that the Somo "excludes the termination of protective patrols in communities." *With a report from Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

NEWSBRIEFS

No Christmas solicitations

CEBU CITY—Policemen in Cebu province have been advised not to hold lavish Christmas parties or solicit and accept donations of lechon (roasted pig) especially from persons with shady backgrounds.

Senior Supt. Carmelo Valmoria, director of the Cebu Provincial Police Office, reminded police station chief in Cebu towns and cities of this policy as Christmas Day draws near.

Valmoria said it would be improper for the police to hold lavish celebrations since the Philippine National Police has no fund for such an expense.

He said soliciting lechon or donations of food and drinks especially from those linked to criminal activities is an absolute no-no. "I ordered them to keep it simple," Valmoria said.

Christmas gatherings at the police stations, he said, could be celebrated by exchanging gifts, serving simple fare and capped with a message from the police station chief.

He said he also reminded the police units in the province that liquor or beer should not be served during their Christmas parties, nor should there be raffling off of door prizes.

Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

Rape-slay probed

CITY OF CALAPAN—Police have formed Task Force Hazel after the body of a Jollibee crew member identified as Hazel Macagaling, 21, of Barangay Malaya in Naujan town was found raped and killed at about 6 a.m. on Dec. 10.

Supt. Marcelino Romero, PNP assistant provincial director, said they formed the task force to solve the killing of the victim as there were still no witnesses to the crime.

Residents also reported hearing Macagaling shout for help right before midnight of Dec. 9 in Ramirez Street, Barangay San Vicente Central of this city but they were afraid to assist in the open.

Madonna T. Virola, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Village officials slain

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A village council chief and a village watchman were shot and killed by two men on Wednesday in Barangay Fugu in Tuao town, police said.

Ronaldo Cedano, 43, Fugu village chief, and Joel Sauadan, 25, a barangay tanod, were in a village store when they were attacked.

Both suffered bullet wounds from an Armalite rifle, police said. Investigators were looking into either personal grudge or love triangle as the motive of the killing.

Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

Son of ex-gov dies

CAUAYAN CITY—The eldest son of former Gov. Benjamin Dy Sr. and Cecille La Madrid-Dy died on Dec. 11 after a heart attack in the family home here.

Benjamin Dy Jr., 35, a trader who ran but lost to Jose Panganiban Jr. for mayor in Angadanan town in the 2004 elections, complained of chest pains and later collapsed while in his father's house here. Relatives took him to the Ester Garcia Emergency Hospital where he died.

He is the nephew of Isabela Rep. Faustino Dy III and Cauayan City Mayor Caesar Dy and grandson of the late political patriarch, Faustino Dy Sr., and Natividad de Guzman-Dy. He is survived by his wife Bea and five children.

Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

Quezon cop gunned down

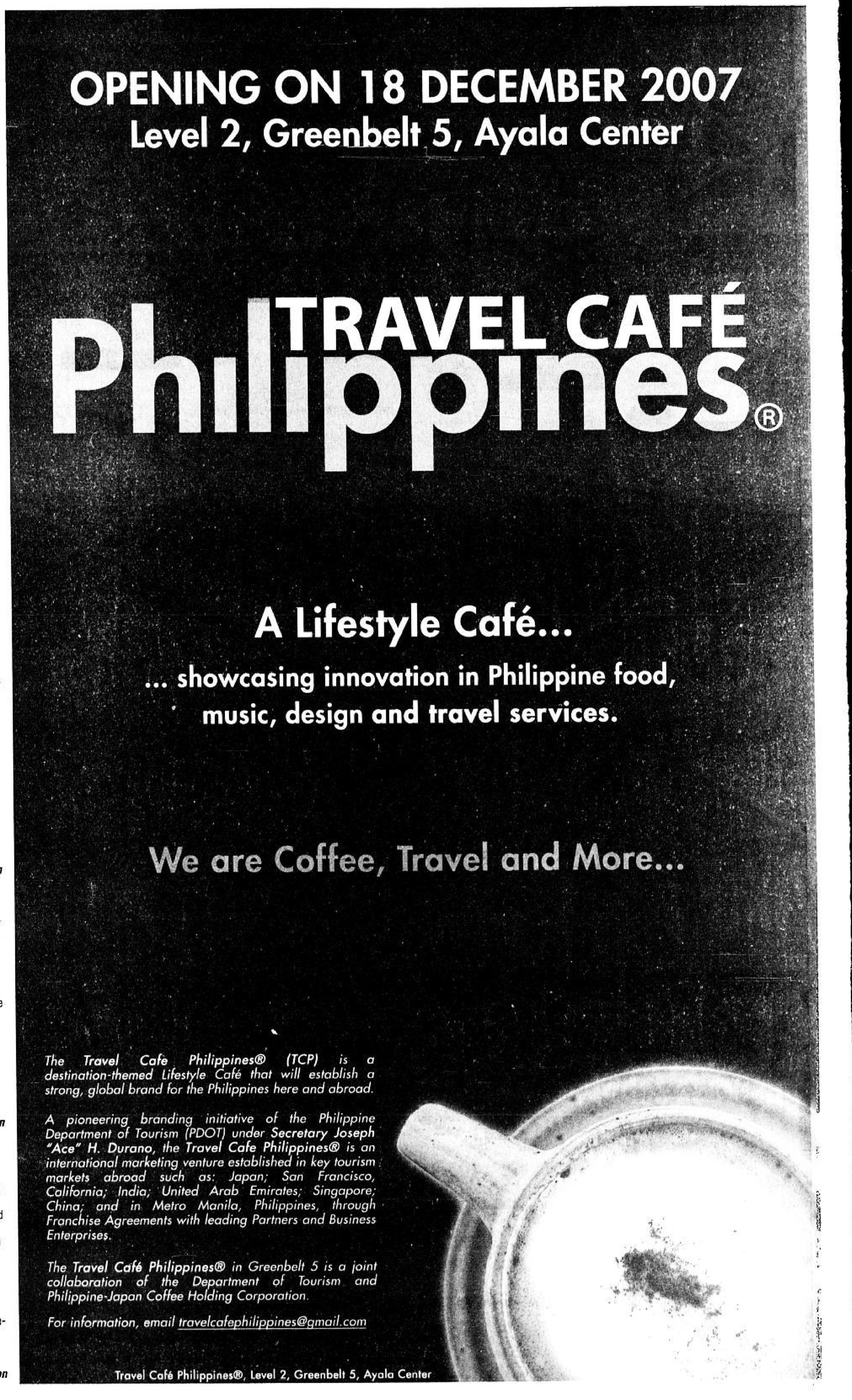
LUCENA CITY—A policeman assigned to northern Quezon was gunned down by suspected New People's Army assassins while on his way home in Infanta town Dec. 14.

Infanta police chief Insp. Harold Cuesta said SPO2 Tomas Corpuz, assigned to the nearby General Nakar Municipal Police Office, was on his motorcycle when one of the suspects stopped him near his house in Barangay Dinahican.

Two other suspects immediately approached from behind and fired successive shots from handguns, fatally hitting the policeman in different parts of the body.

The policeman died on the spot, Cuesta said.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon



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A city hall worker arranges Christmas decorations made from recycled materials.

Eye doctors deter scam on cataract surgeries

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) and the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmologists (PAO) have entered into an agreement to help deter spurious claims and unethical practices in cataract surgeries.

The memorandum of agreement, signed Dec. 9 by PhilHealth Acting President and Chief Executive Officer Lorna Fajardo and PAO President Dr. Dominga Padilla, provides for closer coordination between the PhilHealth and PAO concerning claims for cataract operations.

Under the agreement, PhilHealth will coordinate with PAO in the resolution of issues arising from claims for cataract surgery patients recruited through medical missions or other recruitment schemes. It will also provide support to PAO in the investigation or verification of claims for cataract surgeries.

PAO, which has 1,300 members and 10 regional chapters, has agreed to discipline its members with violations based on those referred by PhilHealth. It also agreed to coordinate with PhilHealth in the conduct of PAO-sponsored community-based cataract projects to properly identify claims for payment.

Last month, PhilHealth stopped the payment of claims for cataract surgery during medical missions and through recruitment schemes amid irregularities in claims of hospitals and doctors involving hundreds of millions of pesos.

Administrative cases

It has also filed administrative cases against doctors and three hospitals in Negros Occidental in relation to irregularities in insurance claims for cataract surgeries.

The doctors and hospitals are facing 34 counts of violations of Republic Act No. 7875 (National Health Insurance Act) before PhilHealth's prosecution department.

The alleged violations included the submission of padded claims, misrepresentation and violation of PhilHealth warranties of accreditation.

The violations are grounds for the nonrenewal or revocation of accreditation of doctors and hospitals and the imposition of a fine from P10,000 to P50,000. Criminal charges for falsification of documents and estafa could also be filed against the respondents.

Padilla said, in a text message, that the signing of the agreement will give PAO "teeth to police our ranks."

PAO has earlier decried the manner of getting patients by using recruiters-agents or "seekers" as unethical.

PhilHealth paid 19,145 cataract-related claims reaching around P390 million to hospitals and doctors in Western Visayas from January 2004 to June 2007, according to data from PhilHealth's corporate planning department.

Last year, PhilHealth paid P48,491,030 in professional fees alone to 10 doctors in Western Visayas for eye-related operations.

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15 teenagers saved from illegal sex trade in Mindoro

CITY OF CALAPAN—THE DEPARTMENT of Social Welfare and Development has intensified its campaign against trafficking of persons after its officials were trained how to handle the problem two months ago.

As a result, the agency recently intercepted 15 minors aged 15-19 years, DSWD provincial officer Teresita Umbao said.

Minors are vulnerable to being trafficked by unscrupulous individuals, she said.

Umbao said DSWD personnel were now providing the minors basic services, such as custody with counseling.

But she expressed frustration that the victims would not want to file a case against the recruiters.

Umbao said the officials were simultaneously holding orientation on antitrafficking among newly elected officials in the municipalities of Puerto Galera, San Teodoro, Baco, Bansud and Gloria.

The effort is in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, Philippine National Police, Department of Justice, Philippine Ports Authority, courts and barangay, municipal and provincial councils for the welfare of children.

Judge Manolo Brotonel of the Calapan Regional Trial Court and one of the country's outstanding judges, traced to poverty the root cause of trafficking of minors for prostitution, forced labor and pornography.

"Unless this problem is properly addressed, trafficking of women will continue. The family as a basic social institution should be strengthened through educational, moral and economic measures," Brotonel said.

"There's a saying in morality that charity begins at home."

Umbao said the subnational conference (Luzon) on antitrafficking of persons held on Dec. 11-12 in Manila coincided with the International Anti-Trafficking Day on Dec. 12 when the 18-day Campaign to End Violence Against Women also ended, she added.

In her keynote address during the conference, Ombudsman Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez warned all government officials and employees who conspire with traffickers in violating the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act or Republic Act No. 9208 shall be dismissed from service and their retirement benefits forfeited.

RA 9208, enacted in May 2003, penalizes those guilty of trafficking persons for sexual exploitation and forced labor with a maximum of 20 years imprisonment and P2 million fine.

But since the law was passed almost four years ago, only 10 cases of violation have been convicted, according to a DOJ official.

Records estimate 400,000 cases of women trafficking in the Philippines, according to the US State Department's Human Rights Report in 2005. *Madonna T. Virola, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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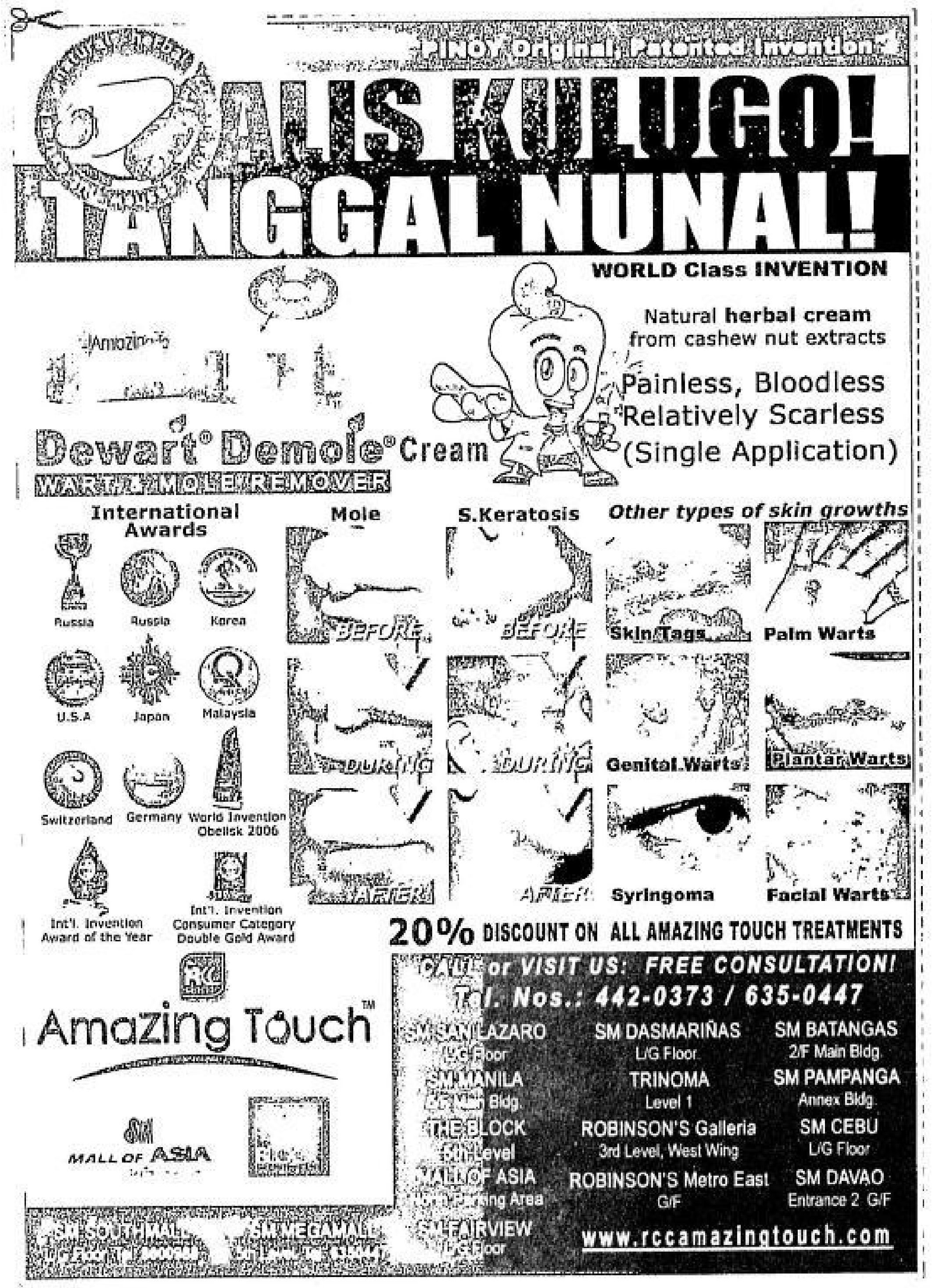
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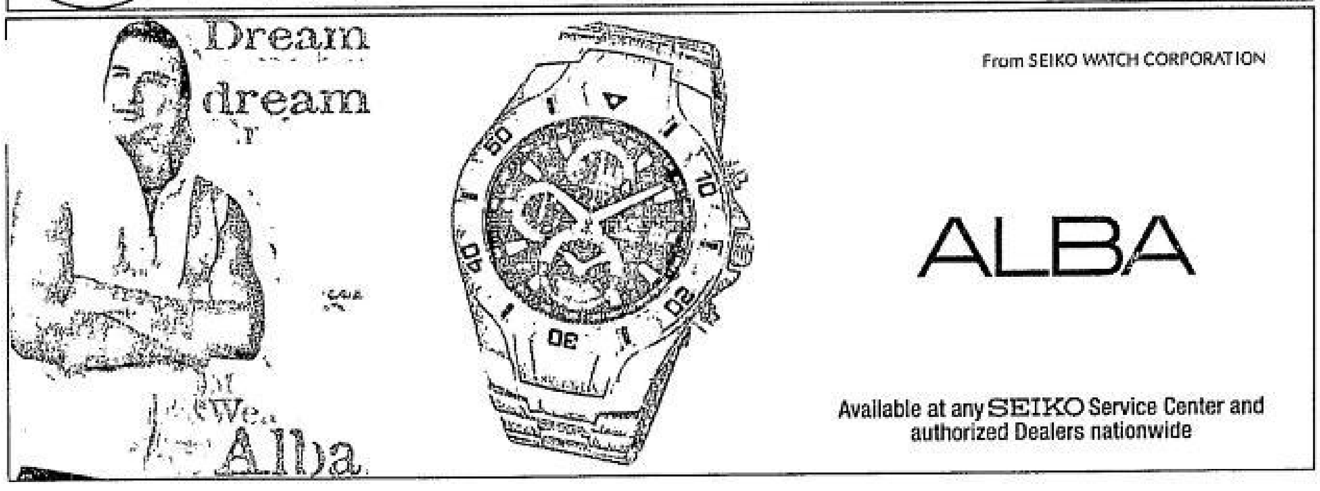
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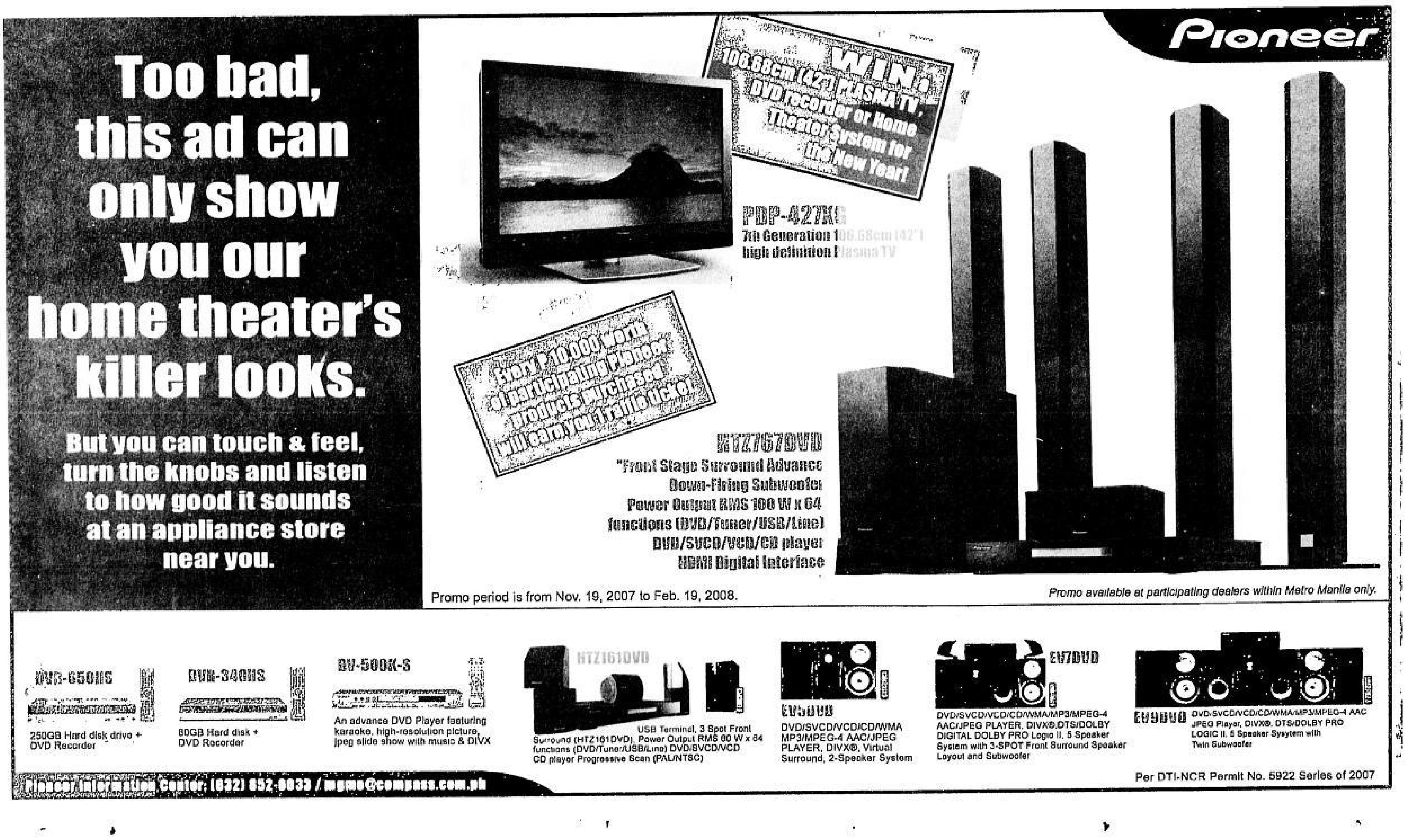
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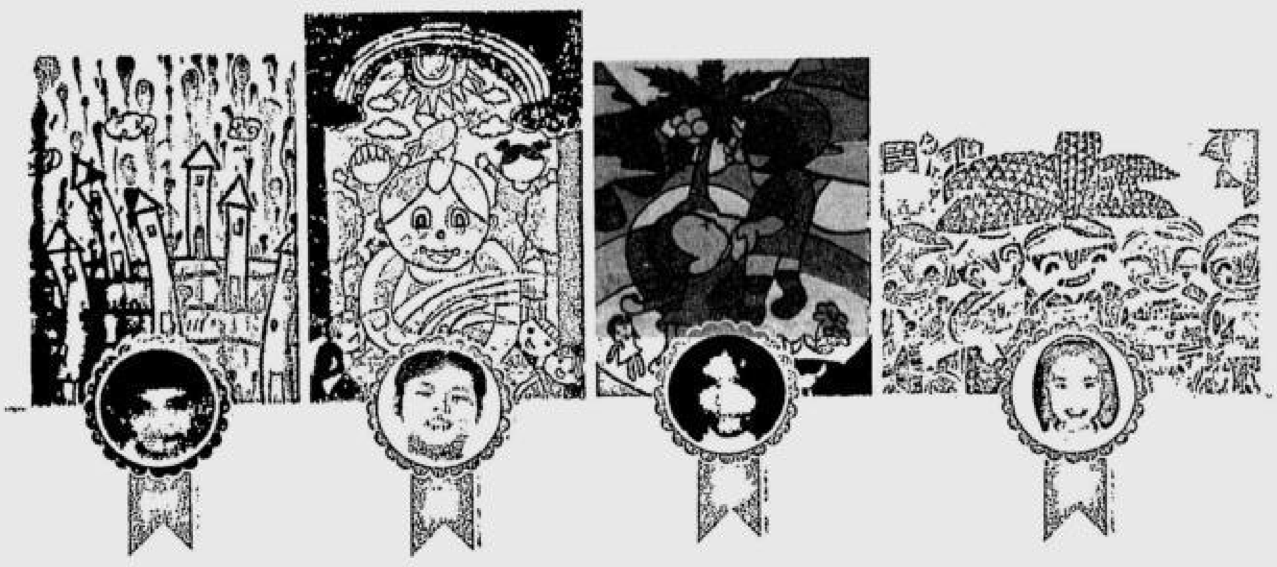
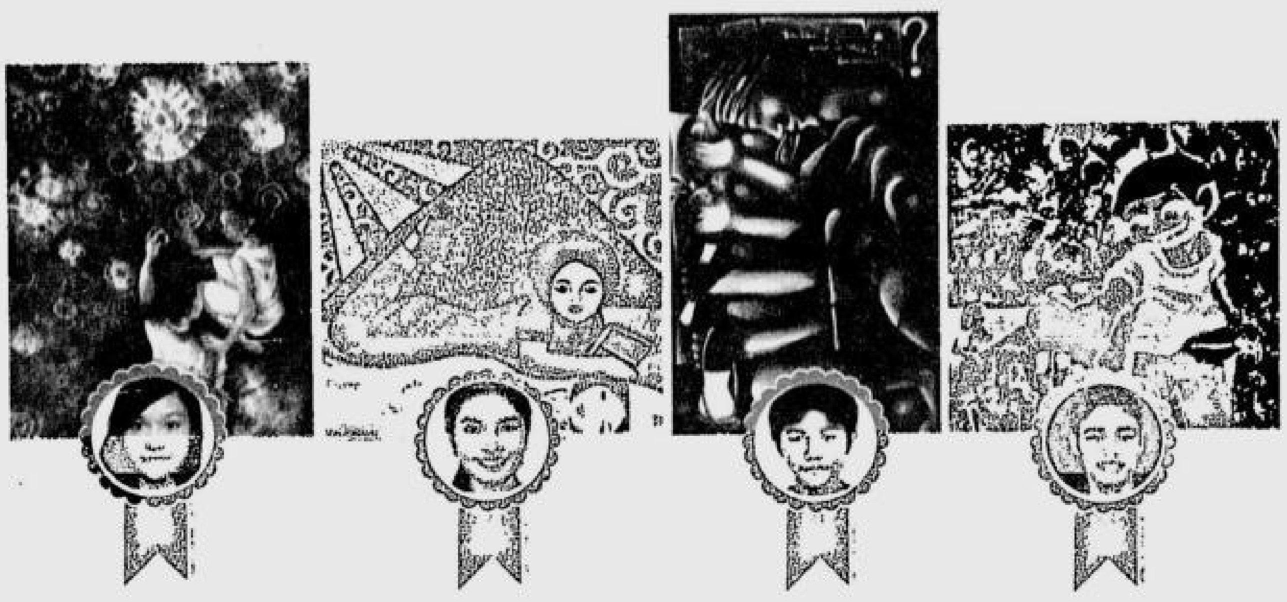


GRADE SCHOOL DIVISION
Grand Prize Winner
John Luckily Y. De Ocampo *S.E.R.V.E. To Us*
New Era Elementary School

Runners-Up
Vanessa Gayle Tiu Tangcueco *My Drawing, My Aspirations*
St. Jude Catholic School

Nadazda T. Yaneza *Tiwala Ka Sa Magandang Kinabukasan*
Antonio Maceda Elementary School

Hana Richelle Tan *Values In Life For The Empowerment Of Mankind*
St. Jude Catholic School



HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION
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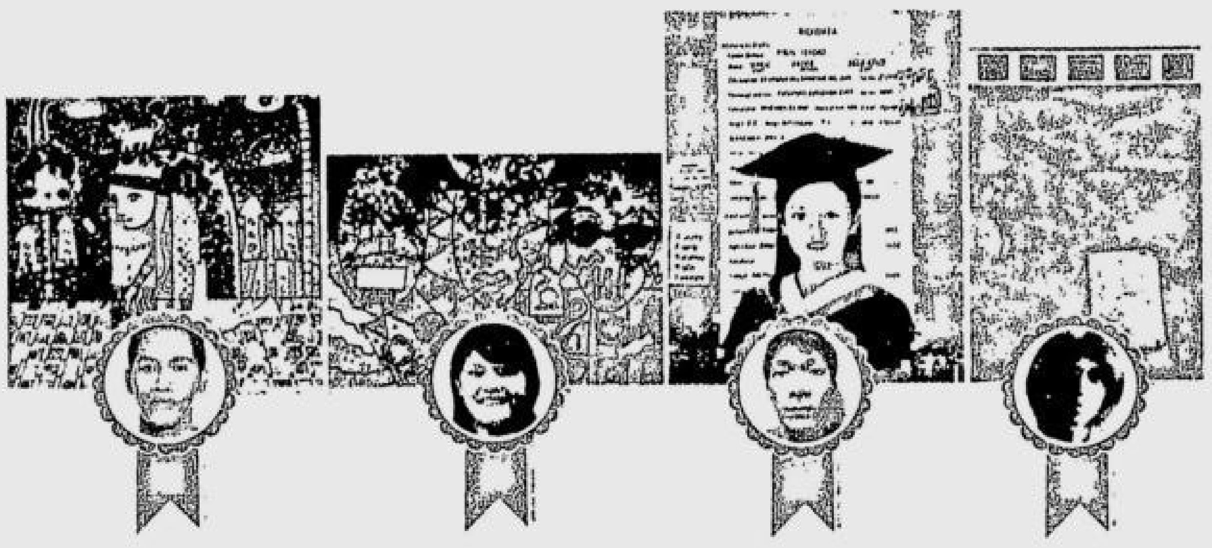
Shekinah Hope B. Valdez *Ripples*
Philippine High School For The Arts

Runners-Up
Jonna Marie D. Sy *Panunaw*
Philippine Tiong Se Academy

Jhon Wendel Robles *Idolo*
Philippine High School For The Arts

Ronel I. Mabunga *Give A Little Love*
Bagong Silang High School



COLLEGE DIVISION
Grand Prize Winner
Rudolf V. Serrano *Serve With Love*
Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology

Runners-Up
Aleli Rae Calaguas *Mga Mukha Ng Buhay*
University of the East - Caloocan

Ronald L. Jerosano *Si Ma'am*
Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Salvador M. Bañares, Jr. *Likhang Pangarap, Gabay Sa Kinabukasan*
University of the East - Caloocan

For the Second Colors of Life Cocolife Students Visual Arts Competition, students from grade school, high school and college were asked to visualize SERVE: an acronym for Cocolife's core values; Sincerity, Empathy, Reliability, Vision, and Enthusiasm. With more than 500 entries all over the country, here are the best twelve.

Board of Judges : **Maurino Bundoc** (Creative Director), **Ovvian Castrillo** (Sculptor), **Aba Dalena** (Sculptor), **Eduardo Dayao** (Creative Director), **Nico Edward Kasman** (Art Director), **Rico Lascano** (Artist), **Pablo Millan, Jr.** (Art Director), **Nonna Nañagas** (President, Dentsu Philippines), **Elmo Nobleza** (SVP, Cocolife), **Nitz Roxas** (Creative Director), **Rowell See** (Art Director), **Michael Velasco** (Artist), **Edwin Wilwayco** (Artist), **Joanne Zapanta-Andrada** (Photographer/Columnist).

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DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

'SIMBANG GABI'
At every crack of dawn starting yesterday until Dec. 24, devotees gather at the church to attend the "simbang gabi" (evening Mass), a practice that dates back to the Spanish period.

Davao court dismisses case vs prof, daughter

DAVAO CITY—THE 7-YEAR-OLD LEGAL battle of Filipino environmental protection advocate and poison expert Dr. Romeo Quijano and his daughter, journalist Ilang-Ilang, against agricultural giant Lapanday Agricultural and Development Corp. (Ladeco) was finally ended by a court decision that trashed the P5.5 million worth of civil damages slapped against them by the company.

Judge Renato Fuentes of the regional trial court branch 11, in a decision dated Dec. 10, said the evidence laid down by the Ladeco against the Quijanos were not convincing enough to pin them down.

No malicious intent

In his decision, Fuentes said: "In the final analysis, the evidence of the company did not apparently show convincing proof ... the subject publication devoid of criminal prosecution for libel as already established, do not prove in a separate civil action filed, any malicious intent of defendants against the corporation, to produce an action for damages."

Ladeco filed a civil case against the Quijanos in 2002 following the dismissal of the libel case it also filed against them, with the publishers, editors and authors of the now defunct Philippine Post, for an article that exposed the alleged ill effects of the banana company's operation on the lives of the people in a small village in Digos, Davao del Sur, called Kamukhaan in 2000.

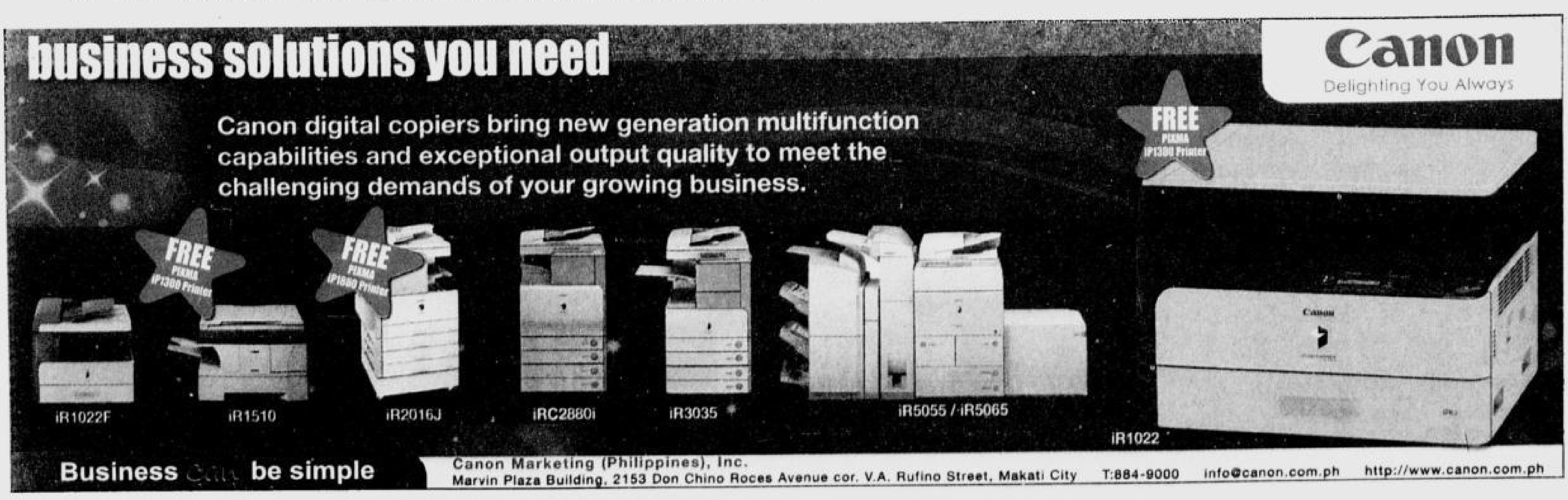
Relief, disgust

But while the decision appeared favorable to the Quijanos, the judge denied their petition for moral damages and instead ordered the company to pay P50,000 to cover the defendants' lawyer's fees.

The Quijanos said they spent more than P300,000 in legal costs. At the height of the trial, Quijano, who had to travel from Manila to Davao, branded the case as a form of corporate harassment against him and his daughter.

With the recent development, Quijano expressed both relief and disgust over what he said was a "patently malicious suit allowed to prosper and linger for several years."

Ladeco is owned by the Lorenzo family, including former Department of Agriculture secretary Cito Lorenzo, a close ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo. *Jeffrey M. Tupas, Mindanao Bureau*



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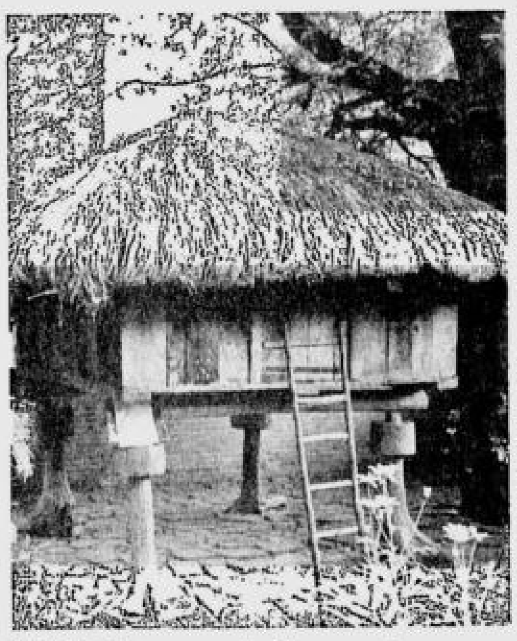
IMMINENT DESTRUCTION

Ifugao folk concerned about granary in London

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—CORDILLERANS HERE and abroad have started a campaign to save an authentic Ifugao granary located inside the Philippine Embassy compound in London which the government was scheduled to demolish following a "death ritual" on Saturday.



IFUGAO huts are probably as popular overseas as the Ifugao rice terraces because of the way they are constructed. But Ifugaos here and abroad are angry at the Philippine government because it announced that it could not save this one—a rice granary reputed built in the 1920s which will have to be dismantled because the London Embassy where it is housed must relocate this yearend.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THENASHMAN.BLOGSPOT.COM

Ifugao families based in the United Kingdom alerted relatives here about the impending destruction of the rice granary, which was bought from a family in Kiangan, Ifugao, in 1995.

The administrator of www.thenashman.blogspot.com posted photographs of the hut, which was described as a granary built in the 1920s "by the late mumbaki (ritual priest) Timmikpaw Bantullay in the village of Ungul in Barangay Pula."

The embassy had announced that it found no suitable custodian for the hut, now that it was relocating out of its Kensington Palace Green address, according to posts made in blogs maintained by Cordillerans this week.

Ifugao Gov. Teodoro Baguilat Jr. said the hut's predicament was "unjustifiable."

He said government officials once consulted him about relocating an Ifugao hut inside a Philippine property abroad, but had not followed up this request with information until the embassy announcement this week.

"I did not even know it was [a hut in the Philippine Embassy in London]. I can't even remember the government official who referred it to me. In the first place, bringing the hut to London as decoration is culturally inappropriate, and now they have no use for it, the hut is discarded just like that," Baguilat said.

He said Ifugao huts are probably as popular as the centuries-old rice terraces in the province.

Ifugao huts are intricately designed, and are erected "like lego-sets" because each beam is shaped by hand to fit together without using nails, he said.

"There is actually no death ritual accorded properties. There is a ritual conducted when Ifugao huts are transferred, but if government is going to spend at all on the hut, it may as well be for its relocation and not a 'death ritual,'" Baguilat said.

Some Igorot bloggers indicated in several posts that the "death ritual" for the hut had offended them.

The administrator of igorotblogger.blogspot.com wrote: "I guess I'm a bit mad with what is going to happen to this Ifugao hut because the last time I was in my village back home, I noticed that the last *inatep* (Sagada traditional house) was no longer where it used to stand."

"Apparently, the owner found the *inatep* hard to maintain, decided to build a house with a GI roof, and sold the *inatep* to an antique buyer so he can use the money to buy GI sheets," the blogger wrote.

It would be "hard to excuse this death ritual that the Philippine Embassy is planning in London," the blogger said.

"They are going to destroy a heritage object just because they are moving to another address? How shortsighted is that? I do not think any other nation will ever entertain the idea of doing something like this. But the Philippines, with its very bad sense of heritage conservation, not only entertains the idea but continues to destroy its heritage mindlessly."

Baguilat said he was contacting his relatives based in London to let them take custody of the granary because it will take another Ifugao to reconstruct it after it is dismantled and shipped out of the embassy compound.

He said Cordillerans have become sensitive to the fate of their relics since stories about artifacts stolen and shipped abroad caught their attention.

One of the most controversial artifacts returned to the Cordillera was the mummified remains of Apo Anno, which were stolen from a Benguet cave in the early 1900s. The mummy was returned to its burial cave in 1999.

NATIONAL NGO TRADE FAIR

17-19 December 2007
TriNoma Activity Center, TriNoma Mall, Quezon City

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highlights

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- Backstrap Weaving by CORDNET
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Come to the Opening Ceremonies on December 17, 5pm!

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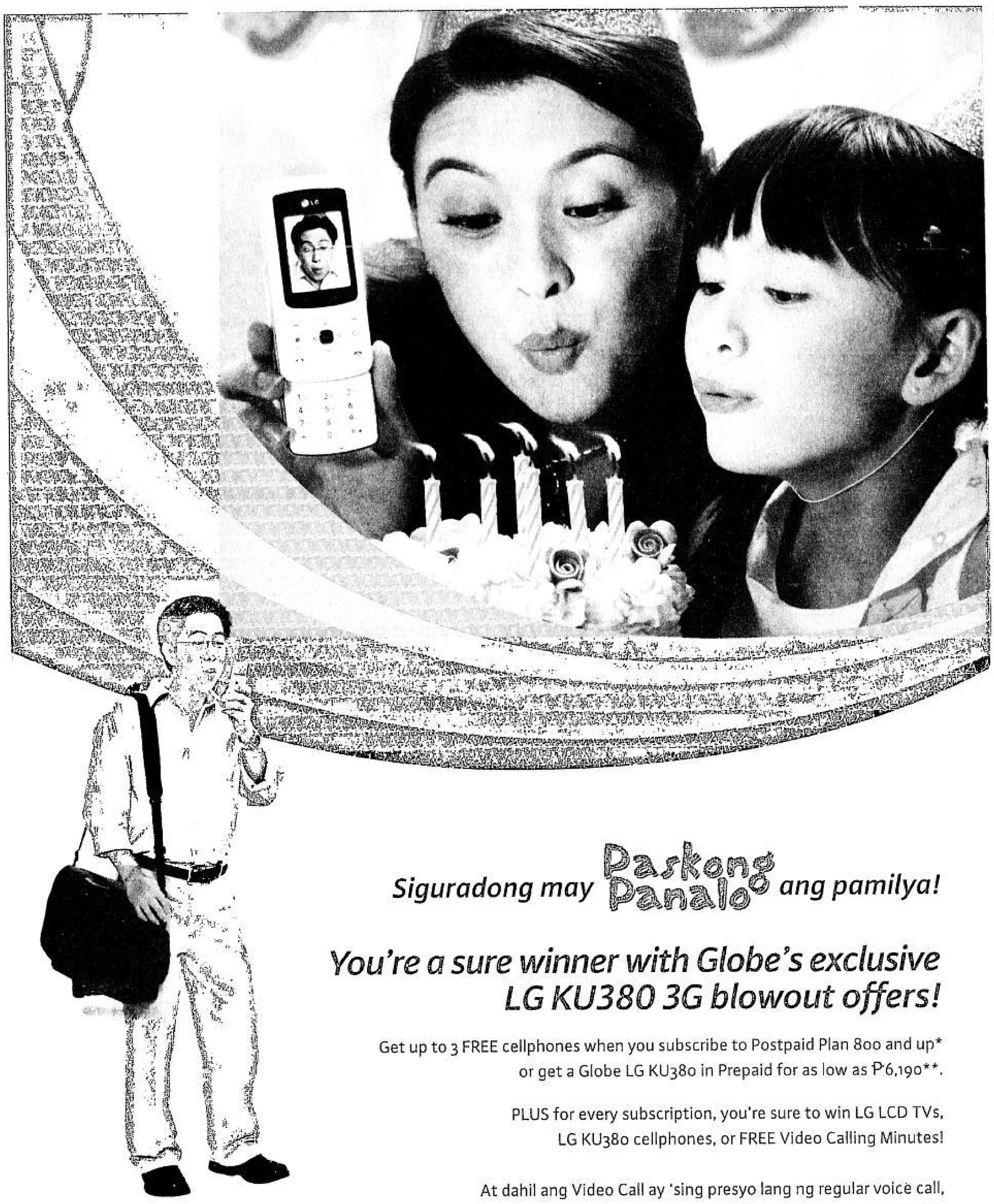

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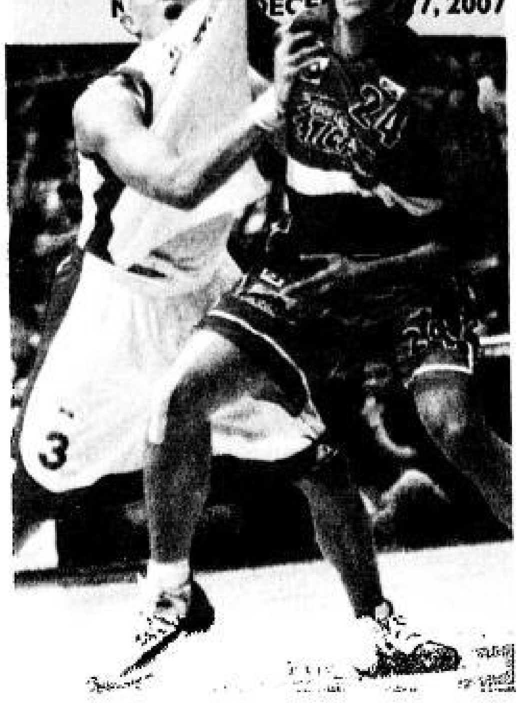


COCA-Cola's Ricky Calimag (right) grabs the shirt of Welcoat's Nic Belasco as they jockey for rebounding position. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Tigers extend win run

By June Navarro

COCA-COLA ENCOUNTERED LITTLE trouble and strolled to its fourth straight win with a resounding 86-72 victory over Welcoat last night in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Asi Taulava was again at the forefront of the Tigers' attack, banging in 32 points and grabbing 18 rebounds despite the highly physical plays thrown at him by the Dragons.

Rookie Ryan Araña stuck out a foot as Taulava was about to land, sending the 6-foot-9 behemoth crashing down hard on the floor during the closing minutes of the third period.

Infuriated, Taulava chased the 5-foot-10 rookie down court but cleverly overcame his anger as Welcoat's Rob Wainwright stopped him on his tracks before he could take a shot at Araña.

"I got beaten up so bad out there," said Taulava, who led the Tigers to their fourth victory in a row since the 2003 MVP was traded by Talk 'N Text.

"At first, I was a little upset. But it was just an accident. He's (Araña) just trying his best to help his team win. I apologized to him," added Taulava after a fifth straight double-double performance for the Tigers.

Suddenly, the Tigers are now in contention for a quarterfinals playoff slot after catching up with the Air21 Express at 5-8. The Dragons, who lost for the seventh straight time, tumbled to 3-11.

Meanwhile, the PBA is expected to announce its new commissioner today as the league's board of governors makes a choice from among lawyer Chito Salud, Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas executive director Patrick Gregorio and Nextel executive Lambert Ramos.

Jayjay Helterbrand fired 34 points and Ronald Tubid added 27 as Barangay Ginebra dealt Magnolia its third straight defeat, 115-100, in the other game. Ginebra improved to 6-8 while Magnolia dropped to 7-7.

The scores:

First game

COCA-COLA 86—Taulava 32, Cabagnot 13, Calimag 11, Buenafe 10, Enrile 8, Dimaunahan 4, Misolas 2, Tolomia 2, Duremdes 2, Telan 2, Isip 0, Arigo 0.

WELCOAT 72—De Vance 26, Ibanes 13, Dulay 9, Araña 8, Belasco 7, Tangkay 3, Wainwright 3, Ballesteros 2, Mente 1, Gelig 0, Lopez 0, Sta. Maria 0.

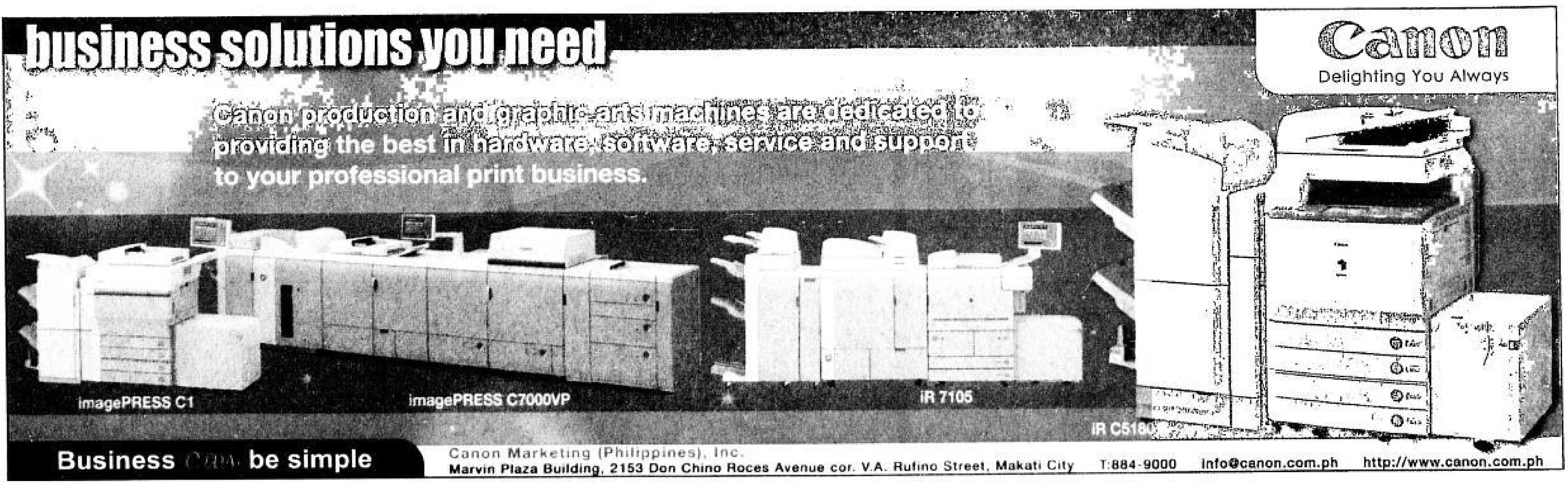
Quarters: 21-4, 45-21, 70-53, 86-72

Second game

GINEBRA 115—Helterbrand 34, Tubid 27, Menk 12, Artadi 10, Mamaril 10, Caguioa 10, Reavis 7, Salvacion 5, Escalona 0, Macapagal 0.

MAGNOLIA 100—Seigle 19, Ildefonso 18, Villanueva 16, Tugade 9, Pena 7, Calaguio 6, Hontiveros 6, Tenorio 5 Racela 5, Gonzales 4, Villanueva 3, Eman 2.

Quarters: 24-21, 49-38, 82-65, 115-100



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QC cop shoots dead 15-year-old suspect

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A TEENAGER WHO REPORTEDLY broke into a bakeshop to steal a gun was killed in a shootout with policemen while his companion—also a minor—was arrested in Quezon City before dawn yesterday.

Mark Anthony Salem, 15, of 11th Street, Barangay Damayang Lagi in New Manila, died on arrival at the East Avenue Medical Center from a bullet wound in the chest.

His cohort, also a 15-year-old boy, is set to be turned over to the custody of the social welfare department.

Based on police reports, Salem and his cohort broke into the Red Ribbon bakeshop on Doña Hemady Street near the corner of E. Rodriguez Boulevard in Barangay Kristong Hari at around 3 a.m. yesterday.

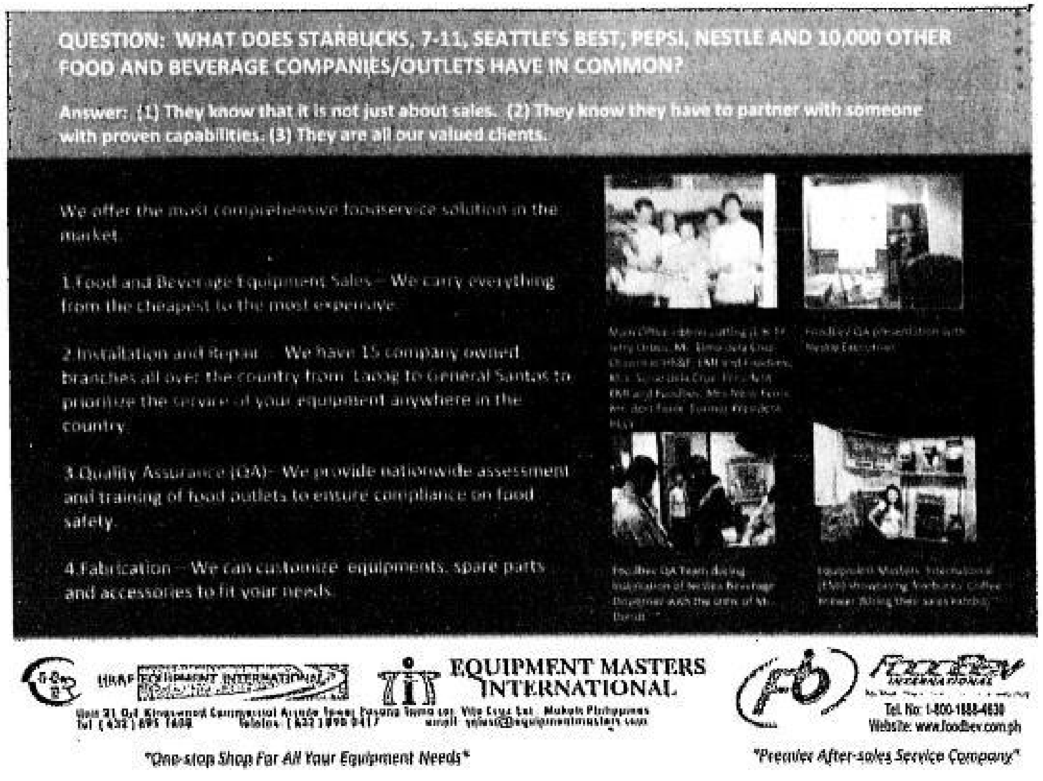
When the establishment's security guard, Edwin Endino, heard noises coming from the administrative offices on the second floor, he decided to investigate.

On his way up, he met the two boys who ran away, bringing with them a .38 caliber revolver which they allegedly took from one of the offices.

Endino shouted for help and was heard by policemen from the Quezon City Police District Station 11 who were on patrol outside a church in front of the store.

The policemen chased the two and caught Salem's companion on E. Rodriguez Boulevard. Salem was shot on Doña Hemady Street after he allegedly trained the stolen gun on the policeman who was running after him.

Upon realizing that they had shot a minor, the policemen rushed Salem to the hospital to try to save him but their efforts proved futile.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Water projects to benefit 51,500 homes

By Amy R. Remo

MAYNILAD WATER SERVICES INC. LAST week signed an agreement with the Manila City government for the swift completion of water improvement projects expected to benefit 51,500 households.

The memorandum of agreement, which was signed by Maynilad and Mayor Alfredo Lim, details both parties' cooperation in implementing the water firm's 2008 capital expenditure projects (Capex) for the city worth P1.56 billion.

These include replacing old pipelines to improve water supply and pressure in Manila.

Once completed, the projects will allow the company to recover some 242 million liters of water daily, which are lost due to leaks and illegal connections.

The recovered volume will then be reallocated to areas that need additional water supply.

In a statement, Maynilad president Rogelio Singson expressed appreciation for the city's assistance, especially in the approval and release of excavation permits, saying this is vital for the swift completion of pipe-laying works.

"We want to continue working with Mayor Lim and the City of Manila. And as we do this, we want to promote discipline among our contractors and ensure order at the construction sites to minimize inconvenience to the public," he said.

Maynilad's capex program for the city involves the laying of 130 kilometers of new pipelines.

Pipe rehabilitation work is also ongoing in the Port Area, Baseco, Ermita, Intramuros and Malate.

An estimated 462,000 people will benefit from the improved supply.

As provided for under the agreement, Maynilad will also launch a program to provide sufficient water and drinking stations to all public schools in Manila.

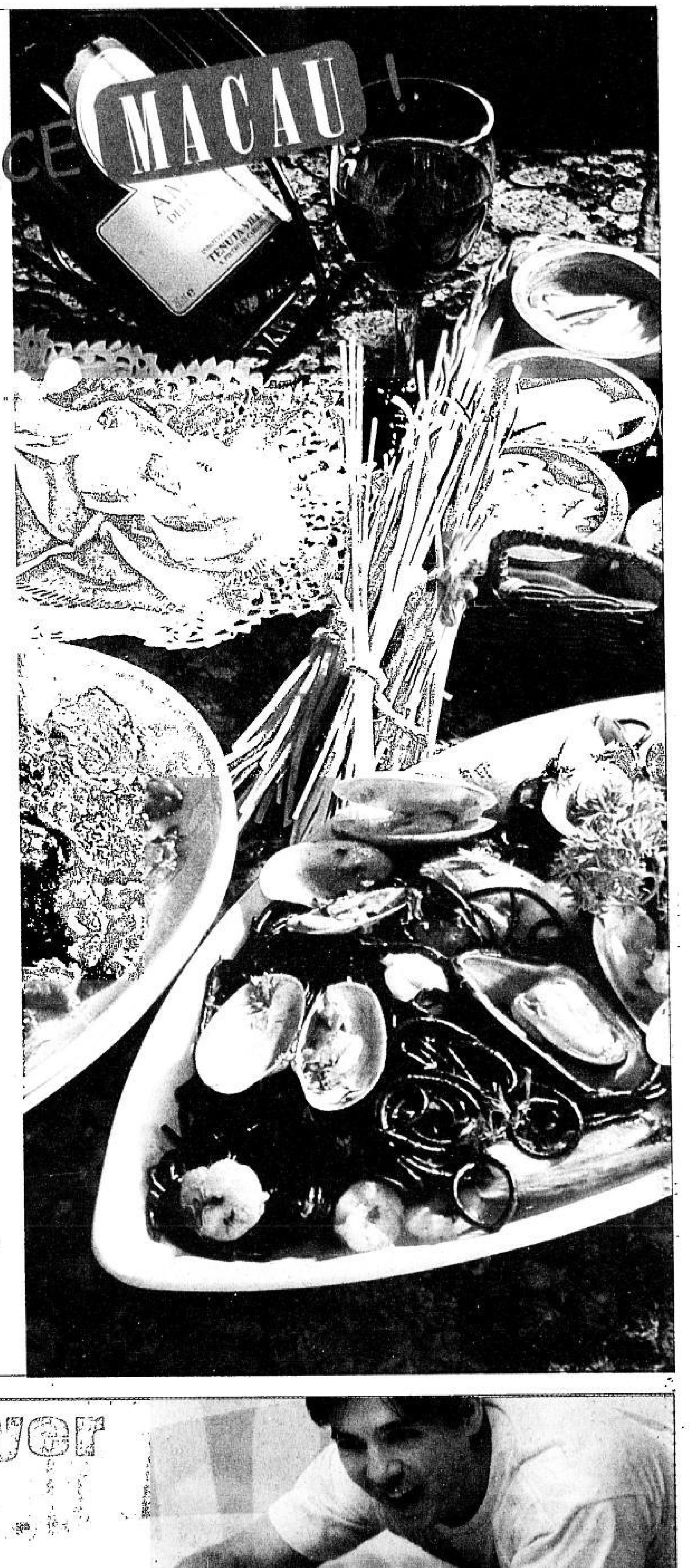
DID YOU KNOW

EVERY December, members of the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity run naked around the University of the Philippines Diliman campus. The Oblation Run, named after the famous UP statue, started in 1977 as a publicity stunt for the movie "Hubad na Bayani (Naked Hero)," which was critical of the Marcos dictatorship.

Recent Oblation Runs called attention to issues like tuition increase, illegal drugs and the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. In 2000, the naked runners called for the resignation of then President Joseph Estrada who was facing corruption charges.

In August 2006, the APO staged a "special edition" of the run in reaction to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's statement that UP was a breeding ground of destabilizers and naked men running around the campus.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research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Jaworski: I know I won in Pasig mayoral race

By Kristine L. Alave

FORMER CONGRESSMAN Robert "Dodot" Jaworski Jr. has vowed to continue his fight for the post of Pasig mayor as the Commission on Elections will start recounting votes from 1,317 of the city's precincts today.

"I want to get closure. In my heart, I know I won in the last elections. I won't give up the fight. This is for the sake of the people," Jaworski told the INQUIRER.

He reiterated his claim that the official results of the city's mayoral race in the May 14 elections did not tally with his watchers' numbers.

The Comelec Second Division recently ordered the Pasig City Treasurer's Office and its local division to conduct an inventory and seal ballot boxes from the 1,317 precincts, the first step in the recount of votes.

Jaworski earlier requested the Comelec to open and recount all the votes from the second district of the city which has 1,067 precincts.

In response, Eusebio, who was declared the winner, filed a counter-protest for the recount of votes cast in 250 precincts of the city's first district. Based on the Comelec's finally tally, Eusebio garnered 116,463 votes against the 107,141 cast in Jaworski's favor.

The Comelec, meanwhile, ordered Jaworski and Eusebio to pay P868,676 and P246,160, respectively, to defray the expenses for the revision of the ballots and other incidental costs. The two were also directed to shoulder the salaries of the canvassers.

The fight over the mayoralty in Pasig City was one of the most closely-watched contests in Metro Manila, with Jaworski and Eusebio trading allegations of vote buying and election tampering over the course of canvassing.

Based on the Comelec's order, its local division should make an accounting of the ballots today at the city's covered court, which is being used as a distribution center for the city government's "Paskong Handog" project for indigent residents. Some parts of the court are also under construction.

Ma. Anne Gonzales, Pasig election office, said they want to reschedule the inventory until after the project is finished.

Jaworski said this is the second time officials of the Pasig City Hall had asked the Comelec to reset the inventory. He expressed fears that his rival could be behind the delay.

He added that his lawyers had sent a "strongly worded" letter to the Second Division opposing a reschedule of the inventory.

If the Comelec does not rule on the issue, Jaworski said he expects the inventory to begin on Dec. 18.

"I don't understand why they're delaying it. If I were the Comelec, I would be glad that it would be out of my hands. Maybe they are anxious about the contents of the ballot boxes," the former congressman said.

Gonzales, on the other hand, denied that the local Comelec wants to delay the inventory. She said the area where they are supposed to conduct the inventory is "not safe." She added that the Comelec office in Intramuros would rule on their request today.

"The designated space is open and there is a road. If somebody throws something at us, then what would happen? I have a responsibility to my employees," Gonzales said.

The INQUIRER contacted Eusebio but he did not answer his phone. However, his lawyer earlier scoffed at Jaworski's claim that he should have been declared the winner.

METRO
Citizen's call
0918-8985566

U-TURN SLOT REOPENED ON C-5 CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From Eastwood City management in Libis, Quezon City: "Thanks to concerned Citizen Callers, the U-turn slot on the C-5 portion of Ortigas and Libis in Quezon City has been reopened effective Dec. 8. The closure of the slots last August was a test to see if this would improve the vehicular flow on the traffic-prone portion of C-5 from Libis to Ortigas. The closure, however, was opposed by commuters, office workers and customers of Eastwood City who said they had to take a longer route before getting to their destinations. Reopening the slot was a relief to everyone affected by the closure. Credit goes to Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando and his people for their continuing efforts to maintain order in the streets of Metro Manila. Eastwood City, the largest commercial complex in the vicinity, has its own traffic aides for a smoother traffic flow in the area."

Thank you very much for swift action

TO THE TEAM of Barangay Pasong Putik and Citizen's Call, thank you for the swift action regarding my complaint about the flow of traffic at Maligaya Park until the corner of Belfast and Quirino Highway. *Maraming maraming salamat* (Thank you very much)!

JASMINE ABELLA-BAUTISTA, 37,
Camarin, CalooCan City

We taxpayers have rights, too!

MAGMULA sa Tutuban papuntang Tayuman, Tondo, ang mga passenger jeeps at mga mini bus na pag-aari diumano ng isang dating congressman ang naka-double park sa magkaparehong side ng Dagupan. Paano na kaming mga taxpayers? Parang isang lane na lang ang Dagupan Street. Wala na ba kaming karapatan na gumamit ng kalsada? Please help, Mayor Lim! (From Tutuban going to Tayuman in Tondo, passenger jeepneys and mini buses allegedly owned by a former congressman are double-parked on both sides of Dagupan Street. As a result, the street has become a one-lane thoroughfare. Don't taxpayers have any right to use the street?)

LOURDES GATDULA, 50,
Tondo, Manila

Mounting cases of cable theft, stray dogs

I WISH to call the attention of Mayor Sonny Belmonte regarding the mounting cases of cable theft on Skylark Street, Zabarte Subdivision in Novaliches which barangay officials cannot seem to solve. Apart from this is the growing number of stray dogs roaming our street, not to mention the stinking mess these mutts leave behind. Thank you.

WALTER CRUZ, 40,
Novaliches, Quezon City

Worsening traffic woes on highway

TRAFFIC has worsened from San Bartolome Church, crossing the Sauyo Road-Quirino Highway intersection, up to C5-Mindanao Avenue. Can anybody help?

DR. GATDULA, 33,
Novaliches, Quezon City

Armed men kill ex-gang member

By Jeannette I. Andrade

UNIDENTIFIED ARMED MEN yesterday killed a 27-year-old man believed to be a former member of a notorious gang and wounded his neighbor before dawn yesterday in Quezon City.

Ryan Flores, a resident of 8700 Katuparan Extension corner Don Mariano Marcos Avenue in Barangay Commonwealth, died on the spot while Ace Monteclar, 24, a mechanic, is undergoing treatment at the East Avenue Medical Center.

Flores, police investigators said, was a former member of the Sigue-Sigue Sputnik Gang who had been previously taken into custody by barangay watchmen for robbery and drugs.

PO2 Joseph Dino of the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said the victims were shot by the still unidentified suspects at around 4:30 a.m. as they were chatting near their houses.

The suspects fled after the victims' neighbors were awakened by the sound of gunfire, he added.

QCPD-CIDU personnel are investigating the motive behind the attack and the identities of the perpetrators.

METROBRIEFS

Trader loses cash, valuables to car thieves

A BUSINESSMAN lost more than P250,000 in cash and valuables after robbers broke into his car by smashing the vehicle's window while it was parked at a mall in Manila Saturday night. Danilo Go Keh, 41, a Taiwanese and resident of Onyx Street in San Andres Bukid, told policemen at the Theft and Robbery section of the Manila Police District that he left his Honda CRV at the parking lot of the Robinsons Place in Ermita on Pedro Gil Street to go shopping. When he returned at 10 p.m., he found out that the front passenger window of his vehicle had been smashed open. Missing were his black bag containing P200,000 and $1,000 in cash, a Sony Ericsson T63 cell phone worth P17,000, a plane ticket and his passport, Chief Insp. Benigno Macalindong told the INQUIRER. Macalindong, meanwhile, reminded all shoppers not to leave valuables inside their car.

Allison W. Lopez

Rizal gov't turns over 5 cars donated to NBI

RIZAL Gov. Casimiro Ynares III has turned over five cars to the National Bureau of Investigation for its patrol and intelligence operations. Ynares said the vehicles were donated by Rene Medina of San Francisco, California. Medina, he said, was a friend and businessman who wanted to help law enforcers. "This generosity of Mr. Medina would help the intelligence bureau's capability to curb crime and lawlessness in the country," Ynares said. The turnover was done recently at the NBI headquarters in Manila with NBI Director Nestor Mantaring receiving the cars. Mantaring thanked Ynares and Medina for the donation and support being given the bureau. "I am so thankful for the good hearts of Governor Ynares and Medina," he said. The NBI chief assured Ynares that the vehicles would be strictly used for the official operations of its agents. Previously, Ynares had donated several vehicles to the officials of some towns in the province for the maintenance of peace and order in their areas.

Kristine L. Alave

Lim imposes ban on inspection of establishments

TO PREVENT cases of extortion and harassment during the holidays, Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim has ordered a suspension of the inspection of establishments until the first week of 2008. In a directive to Secretary to the Mayor Rafaelito Garayblas, Lim said the move would also discourage people posing as city inspectors so they could extort money from store owners. Over 40,000 registered business establishments are operating in Manila. The moratorium, which will be in effect until Jan. 6, covers all licensed inspectors, examiners or field and fire personnel.

Allison W. Lopez

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Asia faces trillion-dollar burden fighting TB

WASHINGTON—ELEVEN ASIAN nations facing the biggest threat from tuberculosis risk being saddled with a whopping trillion dollar economic burden over the next 10 years if they do not beef up their anti-TB strategy, a landmark study shows.

Led by China and India, the countries are already implementing a prevention and treatment strategy, popularly known as DOTS introduced by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the 1990s.

But the DOTS (the directly observed therapy) strategy was not sufficient to reduce the incidence of the disease, particularly in HIV-infected people and due to drug resistance, and had to be restructured.

A World Bank study released last week for the first time captured the economic benefits of extending the revamped DOTS strategy as proposed in the organization's Global Plan to Stop TB covering the 2006-2015 period.

The research covered 22 "high-burden" tuberculosis-endemic countries, including China, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Burma (Myanmar), Pakistan and Vietnam.

"These Asian nations have to grapple with a $1.17-trillion economic cost over a 10-year period if TB prevention and control are sustained at current levels of treatment," Ramanan Laxminarayan, an economist who led the study, told AFP.

"But if they embrace WHO's global plan they could collectively save about $10-billion each year or $100 billion during the 10-year period," he said. "However, the costs of the global plan may be greater than these benefits in some countries."

TB is the leading infectious killer of adults in Asia. The worst affected nations are China, India and Indonesia.

"This important new study shows us why TB control is a smart investment in lasting development for low- and middle-income countries," said Joy Phumaphi, the World Bank's vice president for human development.

"This economic justification for TB control strengthens the case for governments and donors to sharply reduce TB prevalence and deaths in the name of better health and higher incomes for people living at grave risk of TB illness and death," Phumaphi said.

The economic impact of TB deaths and the benefits of TB control among the 22 high-burden countries are greatest in China and India, where the combination of growing incomes and a relatively high number of TB deaths translates into a significant economic effect, the study showed.

Laxminarayan pointed out that the 11 Asian nations accounted for one million of the 1.7 million deaths from TB in the 22 countries covered by the study, saying that extending DOTS coverage could slash mortality considerably. **AFP**

WORLDBRIEFS

US reviews Afghan mission amid concerns

WASHINGTON—Deeply concerned about the prospect of failure in Afghanistan, the Bush administration and Nato have begun three top-to-bottom reviews of the entire mission, from security and counterterrorism to political consolidation and economic development, according to US and alliance officials. The reviews are an acknowledgment of the need for greater coordination in fighting the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan, halting the rising opium production and trafficking that finances the insurgency and helping the Kabul government extend its legitimacy and control. Taken together, these efforts reflect a growing apprehension that one of the administration's most important legacies—the routing of Taliban and Qaida forces in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks—may slip away, according to administration officials. Unlike the administration's review of Iraq policy a year ago, which was announced with fanfare and resulted in a large increase in troops, the US reviews of the Afghan strategy have not been announced and are not expected to result in a similar infusion of combat forces. ***NYT***

Turkish planes bomb northern Iraq

SULAIMANIYA, IRAQ—Turkish warplanes bombed villages deep in northern Iraq early on Sunday, killing one woman and wounding two other people in one of the heaviest raids against Kurdish rebels in months, local officials said. In Ankara, the Turkish military's General Staff said in a statement its warplanes had attacked targets of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, which uses northern Iraq as a base from which to attack security forces inside Turkey. ***Reuters***

Stem cells from fat to fix breasts defects

SAN ANTONIO—For the first time, doctors have used stem cells from liposuctioned fat to fix breast defects in women who have had cancerous lumps removed. The approach is still experimental, but holds promise for millions of women left with cratered areas and breasts that look very different from each other after cancer surgery. It also might be a way to augment healthy breasts without using artificial implants. So far, it has only been tested on about two dozen women in a study in Japan. But doctors in the United States say it has great potential. ***AP***

HERE COMES CHRISTMAS
A woman rides in a float as she takes part in the Light Festival Parade in San Jose, California, Dec. 15. Thousands of people attended this festival usher in Christmas in the United States. AFP

Obama hits his stride as Clinton staggers

DES MOINES, IOWA—BARACK Obama is hitting his stride, just as Hillary Clinton's Democratic juggernaut stutters, setting up a punch-for-punch 18-day run-in to the first White House nominating clash.

The race is a statistical dead heat in Iowa, before the fabled nominating caucuses on Jan. 3, and a dogfight in New Hampshire, which votes five days later.

Most surveys show Obama rising, and the longtime frontrunner sliding, suggesting that the young senator's timing may be spot on.

An Obama spurt which began in Iowa, appears to be spreading, raising doubts about the notion that Clinton can afford a loss in Iowa, due to a lead in national polls and a 'firewall' in later states.

"The impression starting to form out here is the same," said Dante Scala, a professor at the University of New Hampshire.

"From Hillary Clinton having a large lead, to Hillary Clinton basically being in a statistical tie—a one-point lead is not a very high wall."

Should the Illinois senator win the nomination, an encounter this week between the foes on an airport tarmac in Washington may come to be seen as the moment when history's course was set.

Clinton, who once reigned over the Democratic field, had to offer an embarrassing personal apology, after an aide raised Obama's dabbling in drugs as a wayward teenager, in her campaign's latest clumsy attack on him.

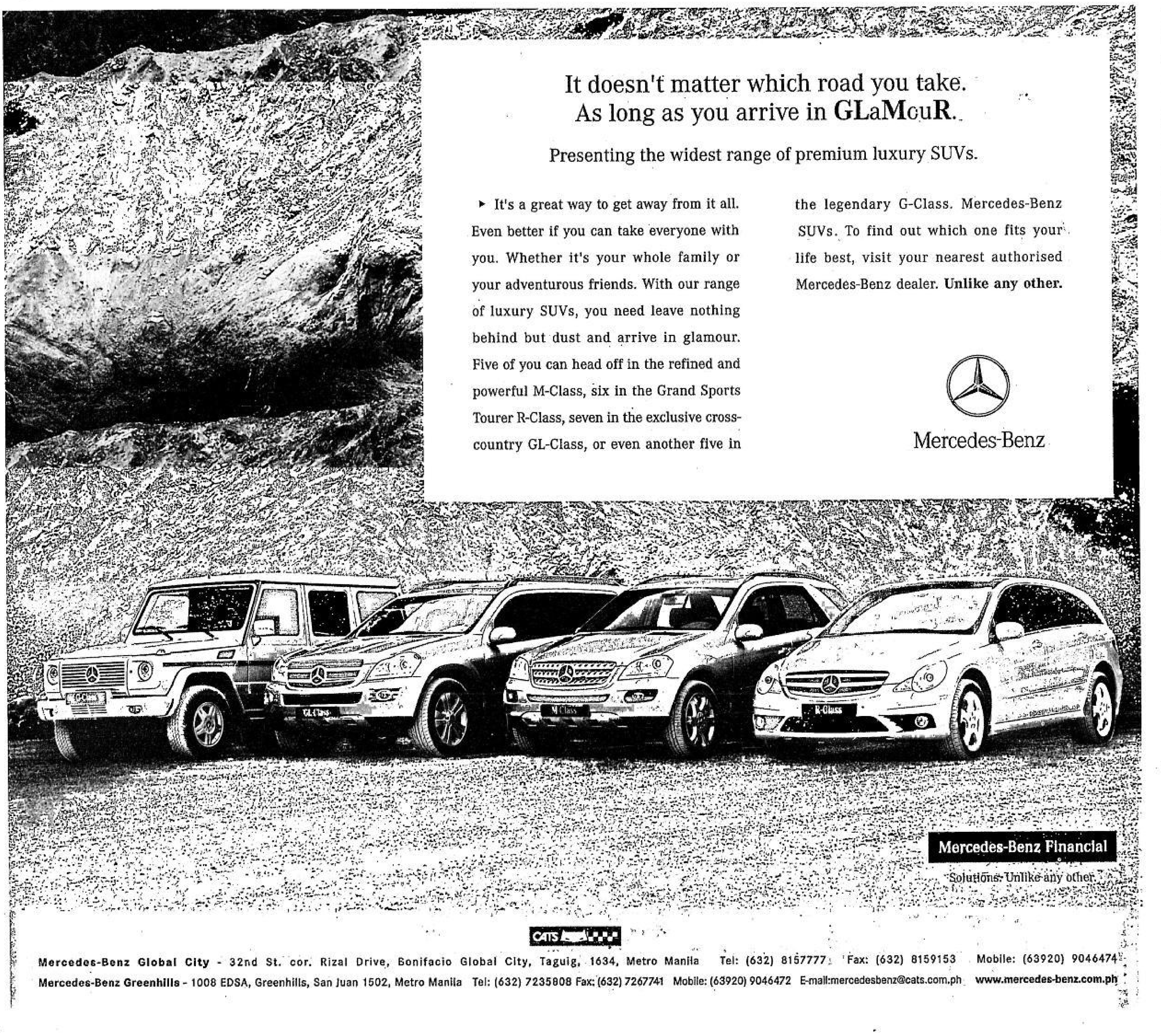
Hours later, in the last pre-caucuses Democratic debate, Obama displayed a new confidence, and brushed aside Clinton, who's previous imperiousness was replaced by a scrappy new persona.

Obama, former Democratic Sen. Bob Kerrey told The Los Angeles Times, has "either peaked, or he's on a trend line that is going to make him the nominee of the party."

Whether this is an Obama boom, or an Obama bust will likely be decided by the rivals' exhausting treks through Iowa in the next 18 days.

Clinton aims to solidify her support among women and older voters who are most likely to caucus. Obama hopes to confound predictions his legions of young voters will not show up to caucus.

The ex-first lady is putting on a brave face, despite the indignity of having to deny her campaign is disintegrating. ***AFP***



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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US now balks at climate accord

NUSA DUA, INDONESIA—A hard-fought deal fixing a 2009 deadline for a new treaty to tackle global warming ran straight into trouble on Sunday with the United States voicing "serious concerns" over its provisions.

As negotiators headed home after two weeks of intense haggling, the White House complained that the agreement did not do enough to commit major emerging economies such as China and India to big cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

It underlined lingering division over how to confront the perils of global warming, which scientists warn will put millions of people at risk of hunger, homelessness and disease by the end of the century if temperatures keep rising at current rates.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who flew to the Indonesian island of Bali for a late appeal for flexibility, praised the agreement as a "pivotal first step" to tackle what he called "the defining challenge of our time."

With the deal, the summit of 190 nations launched a process to negotiate a new treaty for when the UN Kyoto Protocol's pledges on slashing greenhouse gas emissions expire in 2012.

"Last night in Bali the world community decided to take a bold step into the future," Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who came to power last month and swiftly reversed the country's previous stance by ratifying Kyoto, said in Brisbane. "But it's only one step and we've got a long, long way to go."

European nations and environmentalists broadly welcomed the move, although it did not go as far as many had wished by failing to specify any targets for slashing the emissions blamed for global warming.

An isolated US delegation had backed down during an unplanned 13th day of talks and said it would finally accept the deal, but hours later US President George W. Bush's administration appeared to take a step back.

The White House said any Kyoto successor treaty must acknowledge a country's sovereign right to pursue economic growth and energy security.

While there were several positive aspects to the Bali deal, it added, the "United States does have serious concerns about other aspects of the decision as we begin the negotiations."

The United States is the only major industrialized nation to reject Kyoto, arguing it is unfair as it does not require rapidly growing emerging economies such as China to meet targeted emissions curbs.

China is the world's second largest greenhouse-gas emitter after the United States, and is also outside the Kyoto treaty.

The White House said future talks must acknowledge that developed nations could not tackle climate change on their own through targeted emissions cuts, and that major emerging economies had to be drawn in.

"Empirical studies on emission trends in the major developing economies now conclusively establish that emissions reductions principally by the developed world will be insufficient to confront the global problem effectively." *AFP*

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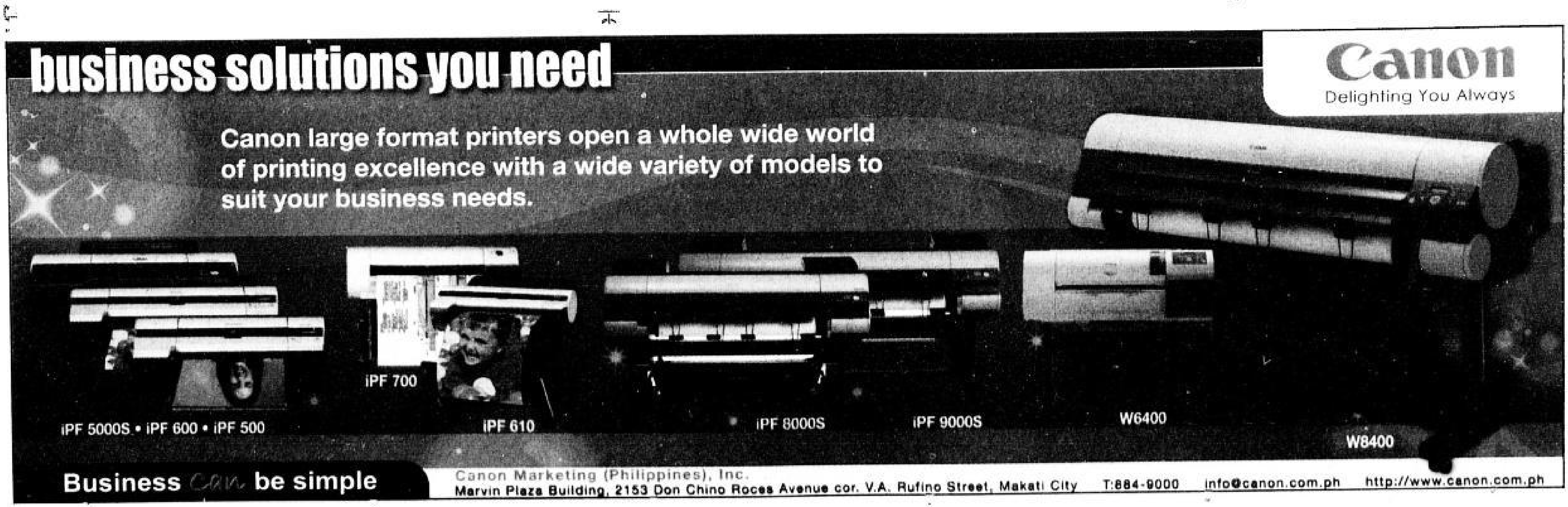

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Woods right on Target, boosts lead to 6 /A32

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Spurs' lucky 13 /A32

RP loses clout in 14 pet events

SAVING GRACE: Super tanker Miguel Molina's four-gold harvest eased, sort of, the pain of the Philippines' debacle in the SEA Games. RAFFY LERMA

8-sport golden flop consigns Pinoys to worst SEAG finish

By Ernesto A. Gonzales
Sports Features Editor

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—IF there really was no way for Thailand to lose, there really was no way either for the defending champion Philippines to place no lower than fifth in the 24th Southeast Asian Games here.

24th SEA GAMES
6 - 15 DECEMBER 2007
NAKHON RATCHASIMA
THAILAND

The Thais did prove untouchable, claiming their most bountiful harvest of 183 gold medals from 42 sports to celebrate the 80th birthday of their King and highlight their fourth overall championship since the SEAG started in 1977.

But the Filipinos, who captured 113 golds from the 40-sport roster in the Manila SEAG two years ago, failed even to manage a fifth-place finish. In the end, they wound up a worst-ever sixth by coming up with only 41 golds, two behind Singapore.

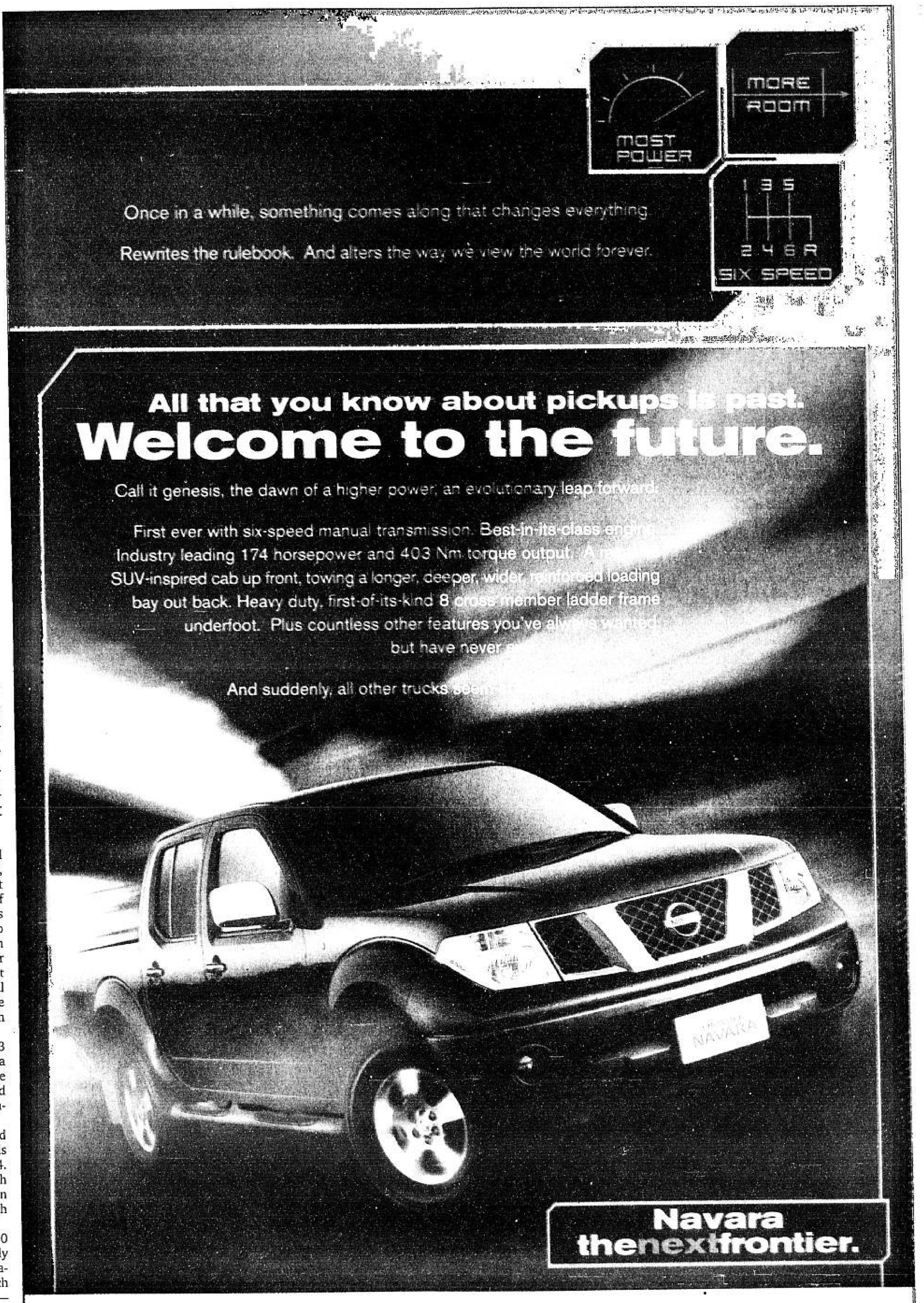
Malaysia, the 2001 champion, emerged the surprise second overall with 67 golds followed by 2003 winner Vietnam with 64. Indonesia, the winningest country with nine championships in what has become an 11-nation biennial sportsfest, was fourth with 56.

After crashing the winners' row in 30 events in Manila, the Filipinos could only deliver in 16 sports this time with eight national sports associations (NSAs)—which contributed a total of 27 golds in 2005—chipping in a ton of meaningless silver and bronze medals.

The golden flops were traditional boat racing, wrestling, bowling, shooting, karate, muay thai, golf and baseball, which can no longer claim superiority in the sport even in the region after taking another loss from Asian Games conqueror Thailand in their title showdown here.

The top NSA proved to be swimming, which doubled its golden output in 2005 with eight while parading the SEAG's top male athlete in Miguel Molina, who won three individual golds and another in the

RP LOSES/ A30



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Foul blow by boxing hits the real culprit

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

*(**FOULED UP:** Officials of the NBN-4 coverage team packed up for home yesterday unsure if they would be able to cover the 2009 Southeast Asian Games in Laos. Everything turned murky and uncertain following the protest walkout staged by the RP boxing team during the 10-event men's boxing finals involving a total of seven Filipino gold-medal fighters. There followed a mass pullout of sponsors, NBN-4 officers here bared. A feared repeat of the ugly incident, they claimed, is sure to turn off future sponsors. No commercials, no coverage.)*

NAKHON RATCHASIMA—PUSHED down the ditch among poor medal scavengers, the Philippines nevertheless had a last hurrah after super tanker Miguel Molina was voted Male Athlete of the 24th Southeast Asian Games.

This early, there's talk of Molina as top pick when the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) makes a list of outstanding performers for 2007.

At least, Molina, with four gold medals, was able to provide instant balm for the RP contingent which could've also set a record with its plunge from overall champion (in Manila 2005) to an ignominious sixth in this biennial sports supremacy race.

No other national contingent has figured in such a sickening nosedive like the Philippines in the history of the Games.

* * *

You bet, that debacle would be ranked as both pitiful and criminal by several sectors.

But before they start pointing fingers on the culprits behind this shameful showing, concerned Filipino sports officials, mainly POC president Jose Cojuangco and boxing delegation chief Manny Lopez, should be assured that they also managed to register a record achievement here.

At the media farewell night a couple of days before the colorful closing ceremonies, the RP contingent was given a special award by host broadcasters.

A loud call was made for somebody from the NBN-4 coverage team to come up the festive stage.

"For the Philippines, the country with the most number of silver medals," barked the program host.

* * *

NBN-4 president and general manager Joey Isabelo, tested point man responsible for putting together the NBN coverage mission, had already gone home, so delegation head Bobby Arias received the token award.

Arias, knowing deep within what the award honestly stood, took everything with a grain of salt.

With its tight, vastly improved format, NBN-4 could've landed the gold together with other countries that also did splendidly in covering the Games.

But in a regional sports meet where only the gold medal matters, NBN-4 was left to take with dignity the ugly award won by the sunken RP delegation.

* * *

It was not an easy task, but who knows?

The award from the host broadcasters, other than being an innocent taunt, could also mean a call for the Philippines to wake up and reform.

In fact, an unsavory view about Filipino participants developed in the broadcast community following the walkout staged by the RP boxing team.

Look, it was no secret that, left with second-rate entries following the pullout of RP Team A, Filipino boxers stood no chance against their Thai foes.

The impending finals mismatch initially surfaced in the cold-blooded knockout suffered by welterweight Willy Velasco at the hands of a Thai in the quarterfinals.

Two subsequent RP-Thailand men's boxing encounters en route to the finals also resulted in horrifying defeats by Filipinos.

"Lopez was terribly wrong," commented People's Journal sports editor Joe Antonio from Manila. "How do you expect RP to win with Team B when its Team A was often no match against the Thais?"

For the record, there were minor discrepancies in judging but, on the whole, the RP women's team got clobbered by a younger, stronger, vastly superior Thai team.

Of course, the RP walkout further cheapened the Filipino in the eyes of his Asian neighbors here.

* * *

There next came unprintable no-balls digs on the famed Filipino valor after the incensed protesters made an instant turn-around and rejoined the finals once threatened with sanction by the international amateur boxing body.

Well, he came a little late, but Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez could've saved the day with his assurance that there was a formal forum where Lopez et al. should've properly elevated their grievances.

You see, a new leader who's seeking reforms has taken over the international amateur boxing body from the notorious, hopeless Anwar Chowdry of Pakistan.

With that foul punch of a walkout, Lopez, frantically seeking change, has unwittingly pointed an accusing finger at himself.

"He should be the one reprimanded, he has been a failure all these years," said Ding Marcelo, fighting sports editor of the Manila Bulletin.

Batawang loses world title bid by 9th rd. TKO

By Dong Secuya, *Contributor*

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO—LOCAL HERO ULISES Solis fulfilled his promise on Saturday (Sunday in Manila), stopping Filipino challenger Bert Batawang in the ninth round and keeping his IBF lightweight at the Auditorio Benito Juarez here.

Solis had vowed to claim his second Filipino victim after Rodel Mayol, whom he knocked out in the eighth round in his fifth title defense early this year.

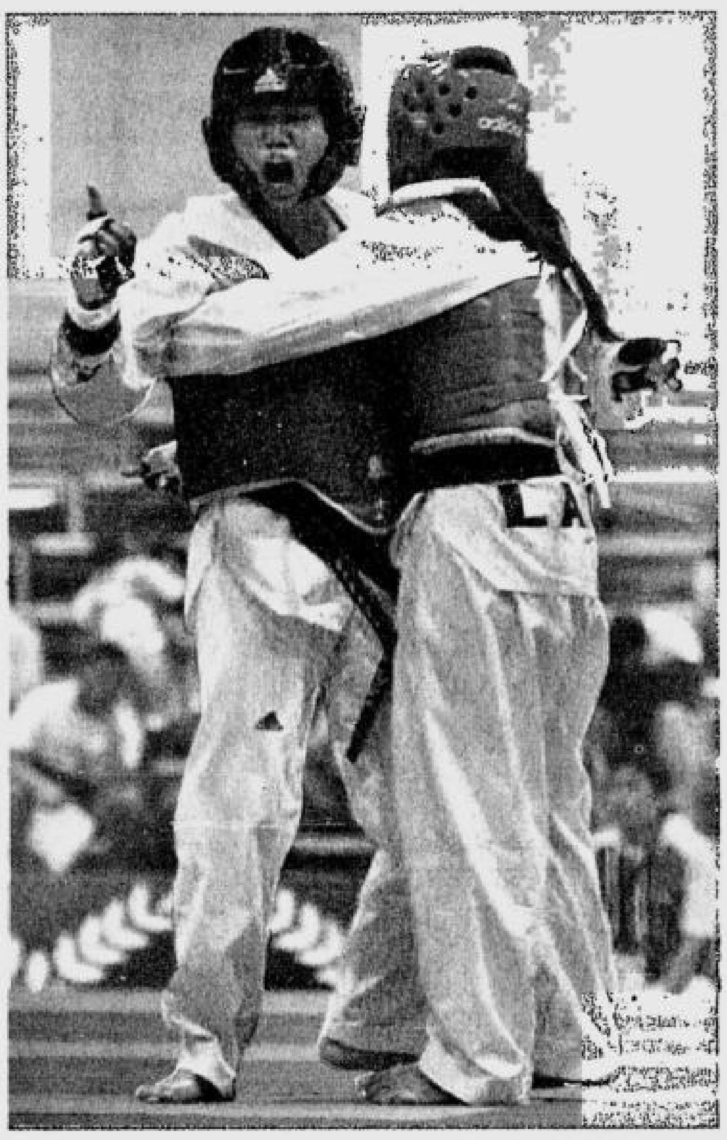
The 26-year-old Solis dominated Batawang, 36, from the start and was raining blows on the Filipino when the referee stopped the contest at 2:33 of the ninth round.

Solis, younger brother of Manny Pacquiao victim Jorge Solis, improved his record to 26-1-2, with 20 KOs while Batawang fell to 50-7-0, with 34 KOs.

All three judges—David Robertson, Rafael Lopez Santos and Dr. Oldemar Soto—had the Mexican way ahead, 80-72, after the eighth round.

Batawang made the fight interesting in the first half of the fourth round when he hit Solis with some good shots in the head and body. But Solis came back strong in the second half to overshadow Batawang's best effort.

From the fifth round, it was an all-Solis show as he tagged Batawang with jabs, combinations and crisp counter punches every time Batawang attempted to throw punches. Batawang was cut in the right eyebrow by a punch in the eighth round.



KIRSTIE Elaine Alora (left) scores against Chamnhath Tikdaphone of Laos in their featherweight semifinal match. Elora failed to keep her title as taekwondo's gold output fell from six in 2005 to one. RAFFY LERMA

RP athletes lose clout in 14 pet events

From page A29

4x100 individual medley relay.

Sharing the limelight with Molina were fellow Olympic qualifiers Ryan Arabejo, JB Walsh and Daniel Coakley, who are sure to create even bigger waves in the future.

Cycling also improved by two its 2005 golden output with four while men's basketball, the country's pride and joy here, and softball remained unchallenged.

But wushu managed only two golds as organizers slashed to 14 the old schedule of 22 events, athletics came up with only five from nine victories in 2005 and taekwondo, with six wins in the Manila Games, got only one through Olympic qualifier Tshomlee Go.

But the biggest non-performer—while causing a big embarrassment to the country in the Games—was boxing, which settled for one gold and 12 silvers, after picking up eight wins in Bacolod two years ago.

Amateur boxing president Manny Lopez denied the seven male finalists, who labored hard for two years, a chance at the gold medal in protest of what he claimed was biased judging in favor of the Thais.

Filipino officials even condoned what boxing observers here called a dastardly act, which nearly caused the Philippines a two-year international ban.

Lopez, a top international boxing official himself, avoided the sanction by allowing the last five finalists to climb the ring and go through the motions of fighting.

With 2009 host Laos planning to stage only 25 sports, experts predict a more competitive SEAG which the Philippines can certainly use to recover its lost prestige and pride.

Boren & Co storms to Focus Cup victory

TOP FEMALE DRIVER PIA BOREN AND newcomers Dominic Samson and Gibson Yu teamed up with precision to subdue their rivals and rule the TRS-Ford Focus Cup Ultimate Challenge recently at the Subic International Raceway.

Boren started the race with a blistering pace, building a big margin over her rivals and giving Samson and Yu the leeway to take turns at the wheels en route to the checkered flag.

The trio completed a total of 138 laps as they bested the team of racing engineer Pacho Blanco, Kim Liu and Michael Lhuillier, which tallied 134 laps in the four-hour race organized by Tuason Racing School.

Matthew Edmunds and newcomers Arnie Alafriz and Alfonso Tuason took third after accomplishing 128 laps.

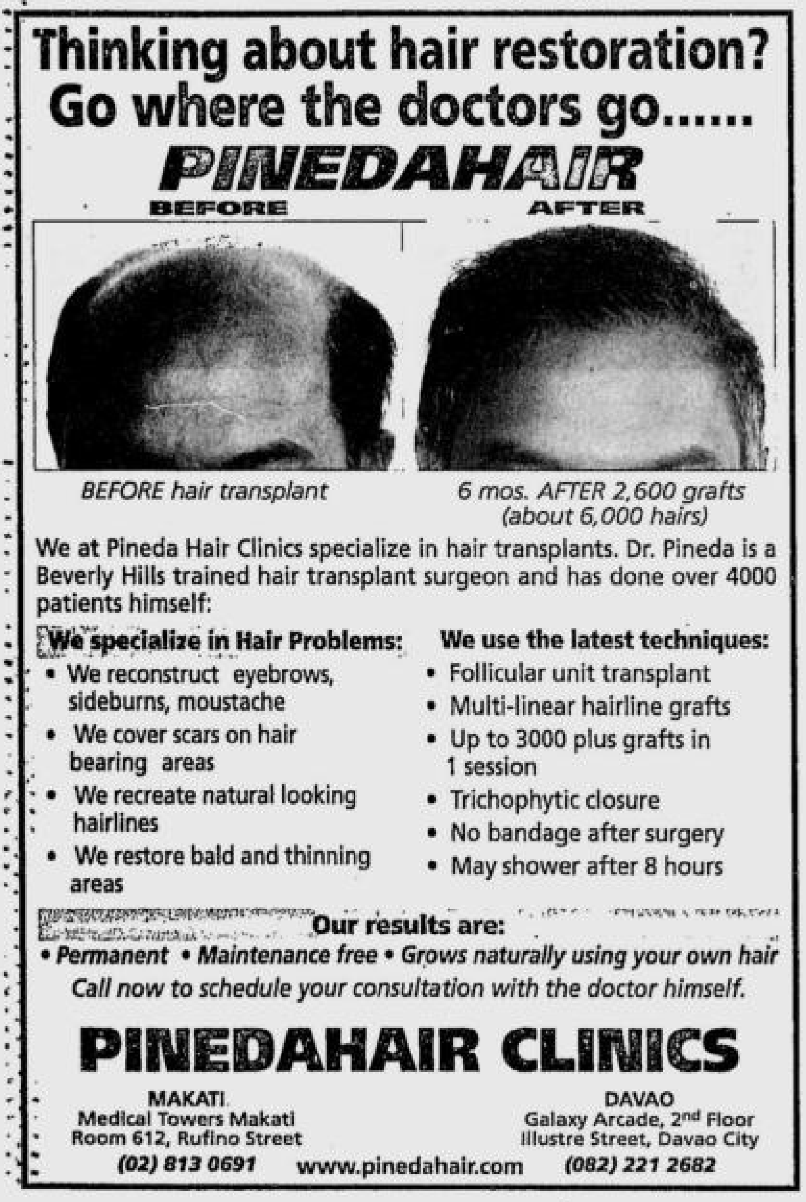
Jed Jalandoni, who emerged the 5th TRS-C! Magazine Top Driver Challenge champion, posted the fastest lap time of 1:51.69 and went on to capture the Novice crown in the Sprint category over runner-up Liu and third placer Alafriz.

Samson clinched the Rookie title in the Sprint category over Quincy Buenaflor and third placer Lhuillier, the provisional second placer who was later slapped with a 10-second penalty for hitting a pylon.

Glen Dasig, AVP of Ford Group Philippines, was elated over the outcome of the event which he said proved the durability of the European car.

For complete results and race details, call 817-7795 or email info@tuasonracing.com.

TOP female driver Pia Boren on the wheel of the Focus she shared with teammates Dominic Samson and Gibson Yu. The team completed a total of 138 laps in winning the four-hour enduro race in Subic.



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Explorers top NBC Invt'l Cup

PAGADIAN CITY—THE PAGADIAN EXplorers finished strong to beat Spring Cooking Oil-Tagaytay, 90-82, on Saturday and capture the Pagadian-NBC Invitational Cup basketball tournament at the city gym.

John Villaver paced a blistering fourth-quarter rally by the Explorers of Mayor Sammy Co to trim the Cooking Oil Masters of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and EVP/Mayor Bambol Tolentino, who led three-fourths of the way.

Villaver had 25 points to lead three other Explorers in double figures.

"We struggled for 30 minutes, but we luckily got our rhythm down the stretch," said Pagadian coach Alvin Grey.

Villaber's consistency in the tourney supported by Sulpicio Lines, Molten, Spring Cooking Oil and Champion Sportswear earned him the MVP award.

The scores:

PAGADIAN 90—Villaver 25, Naron 21, Espiritu 14, Quilo 12, Saludsud 4, Singco 4, Benitez 4, Santiago 3, Sierra 2, Pamaran 1.

SPRING 82—De Castro 16, Epondulan 16, Tajonera 13, Reyes 11, Gulyab 8, Legaspi 8, Yambao Jr. 5, Villamin 5.

Quarters: 19-21, 41-48, 61-63, 90-82

Tie-breakers decide Eagle Ridge Fore by Four Invt'l champions

THE TEAMS OF EDGARDO MONTANO-FERnando Malveda and Elizabeth Lietz-Tess Staub topped their respective divisions via countback in the recent Fore by Four Invitational at the four championship courses of Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

Montano and Malveda piled up 174 points at the Norman and Aoki courses, then nipped the pair of Antonio del Rosario-Oscar Desipeda in the countback for the Class B crown.

Lietz and Staub ended up tied with Imelda Agustin-Violy Pegels for top spot with 133 in the ladies division but won due to a better score on the second day.

It was an all-Korean show in Class A at the Dye and Faldo layouts, with Kang Buk Sum-Ku Bon Hyun scoring a 162 to prevail by two points over An Youn Hwan-Jeon Tae Sung.

The Class C title went to Totie Velasco and Buddy Gob, whose 155 gave them a 3-point win over Roland Go-Christopher Ong while the Class D plum went to Alberto Go-Nestor Ocampo with 156, four up on Wilbert Uy-Nelson.

The sponsors division title was clinched by the Club Marinduque pair of Nilo Ocampo-Mario Parinas who defeated Jason Gob-Tito Mojado of WG in another countback after both ended with similar 141s.

SPORTSWATCH

'Rambulan' derby kicks off

MORE THAN 70 MATCHES ARE ON TAP in the fourth-round eliminations of the P3-million "Pamaskong Rambulan" 6-cock derby which gets going at 4 p.m. today at the San Juan Coliseum.

The list of early qualifiers with three wins each includes Emil Chua (Concrete Breaker), Mayor Buddy Dunca (Banjo), Willy Martinez (WM Golden Wings), Louie Cua (Wang Zhi Zhi), Rudy Jingco (Sto. Cristo), Danny Teves (Naujan Coliseum Dec. 15), Rodolfo Pineda (SJC No Pot Dec. 13), B. Arcenas (BAA Farms), Boy Chayong and Sonny Lagon (Monte), Totoy Haruta (Rainier I) and Allan Siaco (AS Golden Compass).

A bonus of P100,000 awaits participants who will score three wins today.

Makati 6-cocker resumes

SIXTY-FIVE NEW ENTRIES PLUNGE INTO action today in the third-round eliminations of the "Pamaskong Salpukan" 6-cock derby today at the Makati Coliseum.

Twenty-seven participants have posted two wins each after two days of competition, among them Danny Teves, Judge Diokno, Lino Pallarca and Efren Canlas.

Hosts Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co of WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. said bonus prizes for fastest win champion (Toyota Innova and passenger jeeps) will not be deducted from the P3 million prize.

Mayweather, Pacquiao rank 1-2 in ring poll

AMERICAN SUPERstar Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao made the biggest impact in boxing this year, according to a recent boxing survey by Yahoo Sports.

In the poll conducted by Kevin Iole, Mayweather, the WBC welterweight champion and likely Fighter of the Year, and Pacquiao, last year's best fighter, were rated 1-2 in the pound-for-pound contest.

The 30-year-old Mayweather, who holds an immaculate 39-0 record, emerged the runaway winner with 18 of 20 first-place votes for 198 points, mainly due to his devastating 10th-round stoppage of Britain's erstwhile unbeaten Ricky Hatton on Dec. 8.

Pacquiao, who turns 29 today, repeated his conquest of Mexican great Marco Antonio Barrera on Oct. 6 to pool 171 points and one first-place vote.

The pride of Gen. Santos City is slated to meet Mexican champion Juan Manuel Marquez for the WBC super featherweight title on Mar. 15 in Las Vegas.

The rest of the top 10: super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe with 159 points and one first-place vote, WBA welterweight titlist Miguel Cotto (122), Marquez (92), light heavyweight king Bernard Hopkins (91), WBC super bantam champion Israel Vasquez (60), WBC-WBO middleweight titlist Kelly Pavlik (58), light-weight king Juan Diaz (32) and Winky Wright (24). *Roy Luarca*

Lady Eagles zap La Salle volleybelles

ROOKIE KARA ACEVEdo flashed an impressive start, while veteran Charo Soriano provided the strong finish as Ateneo bested rival La Salle, 27-25, 25-20, 24-26, 25-16, yesterday in the UAAP women's volleyball tournament at the Blue Eagle Gym.

Soriano topscored with 28 points highlighted by crucial kills in the final set to lead the Lady Eagles to their second win in three starts.

Acevedo shattered La Salle's defense with her left-handed attacks in the first two sets to finish with 16.

Earlier, Adamson forged a 25-18, 28-26, 25-19 triumph over FEU to join Ateneo and La Salle at 2-1.

National University posted its first victory over winless UP with a 14-25, 25-21, 25-19, 26-24 decision.

Jasmine W. Payo

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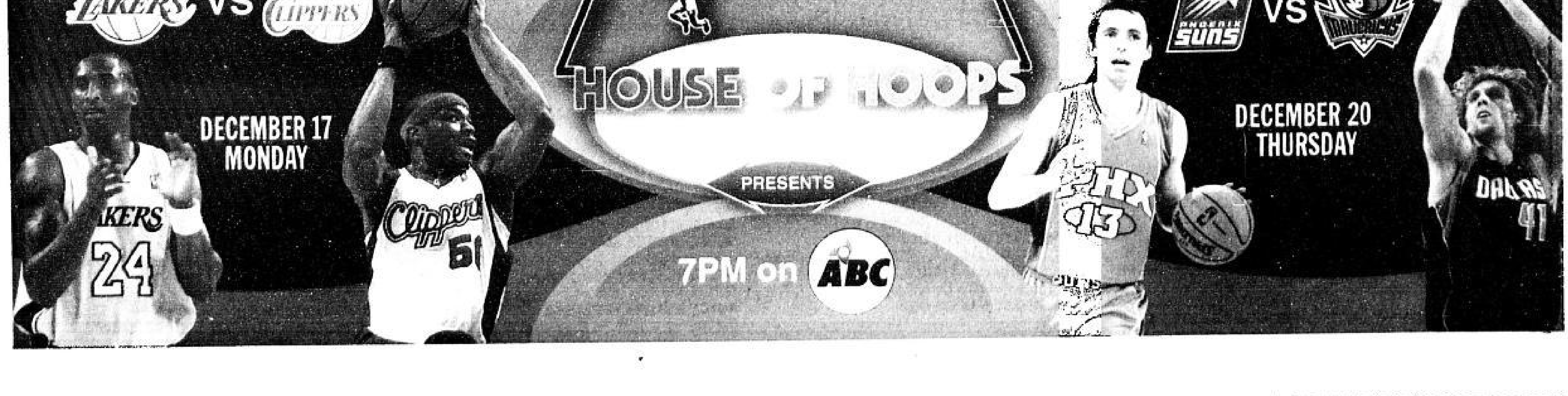

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SPORTS

Woods right on Target, boosts lead to 6

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA—Tiger Woods extended his lead at the USPGA Target World Challenge by shooting a five-under-par 67 in the third round on Saturday.

Woods leads fellow American Jim Furyk by six shots and Zach Johnson by seven at the Los Angeles-area Sherwood Country Club course.

Woods, who is at 18-under 198, missed breaking the event's 54-hole record by one shot.

Woods began the day with a four-stroke advantage over Furyk and came out with plenty of spark with birdies on his first two holes, building his lead to five shots.

Woods made a bogey on the fourth hole and Furyk made birdie to cut the lead to three. Woods built it back to four shots with another birdie on No. 6.

Woods made birdies on 10, 11 and added another on the final hole to build the lead to six.

"Make a lot of birdies," a smiling Woods said when asked what advice he would give Furyk. *AFP*

Spurs' lucky 13

TIM Duncan returns to active duty. AP

SAN ANTONIO—WITH ONE of the San Antonio Spurs' stars out and another just returning from a four-game absence, the team's supporting cast became the guardian of the only perfect home record in the Western Conference on Saturday.

They proved themselves equal to the task. Michael Finley and Fabricio Oberto each scored a season high 21 points to help the NBA champions beat the Denver Nuggets, 102-91, and improve to 13-0 at home.

The Spurs, who had lost two in a row, saw the return of Tim Duncan, who missed four games with a sprained right ankle. But Tony Parker sat out his second straight game with a sprained left ankle.

Allen Iverson led the Nuggets with 30 points and Linas Kleiza had 16 points.

The Nuggets were without starter Kenyon Martin, who was assessed a flagrant foul in the Nuggets' win Wednesday over New Orleans. *AP*

Pettitte admits using growth hormone drug

NEW YORK—ANDY PETTITTE USED HUman growth hormone to recover from an elbow injury in 2002, the New York Yankees pitcher admitted two days after he was cited in the Mitchell Report.

Pettitte said he tried HGH on two occasions, stressing he did it to heal faster and not enhance his performance. He emphasized he never used steroids.

"If what I did was an error in judgment on my part, I apologize," Pettitte said Saturday in a statement released by his agent. "I accept responsibility for those two days."

Pettitte was among 85 players named by former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell's investigation into steroids and performance-enhancing drugs. *AP*

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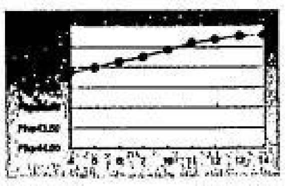

NOVEMBER DECEMBER

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P41.21 = $1

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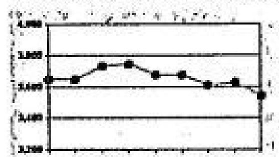
STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B6)

Correction seen to continue

THE TRADING OUTLOOK NEXT WEEK appeared to be mixed, with a few analysts pointing to some buying, as the index nears a critical psychological level.

The Philippine Stock Exchange index last Friday lost 87 points and closed at 3,538.69.

"With Friday's decline, it is likely that

CORRECTION/ B6

OFWs seen to pour in $15.7B in '08

BSP sees no letup in remittances, expects inflows to surge by 10%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas expects overseas Filipinos to pour in an estimated $15.7 billion next year—a 10-percent surge in remittances that are coursed through banks—further fueling the consumption-driven domestic economy.

In a briefing Friday night, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said total remittances in 2008 could even reach $16.2 billion, if the BSP were to include inflows sent through nonbanking channels. This would represent a year-on-year growth of 8 percent over the aggregate level of $15 billion expected for 2007.

Tetangco said that for this year, the banking system would likely capture $14.3 billion in remittances, up by 12 percent over last year's inflows. The projected figure for 2007 represents about 95 percent of total remittances.

If the BSP were to include money coursed outside the banking system, total remittances could hit $15 billion by the end of the year—up by 7 percent over last year, and higher than the BSP's earlier expected total growth of 5 percent, Tetangco said.

Nonbank or informal remittance channels are defined as unlicensed or unregulated operations, such as money sent through relatives, acquaintances or other travelers.

Based on the BSP's forecasts for next year, the banking system would be able to capture 97 percent of total remittance flows, indicating that the share of the informal channel would shrink further from 5 percent this year to 3 percent.

An earlier study on the Mexican experience showed that remittances held as deposits in the banking system would be two to three times more beneficial than those coursed elsewhere, as these formal inflows could be invested, particularly in small and micro businesses.

As such, the BSP is promoting the use of formal banking channels as a safer, more pro-

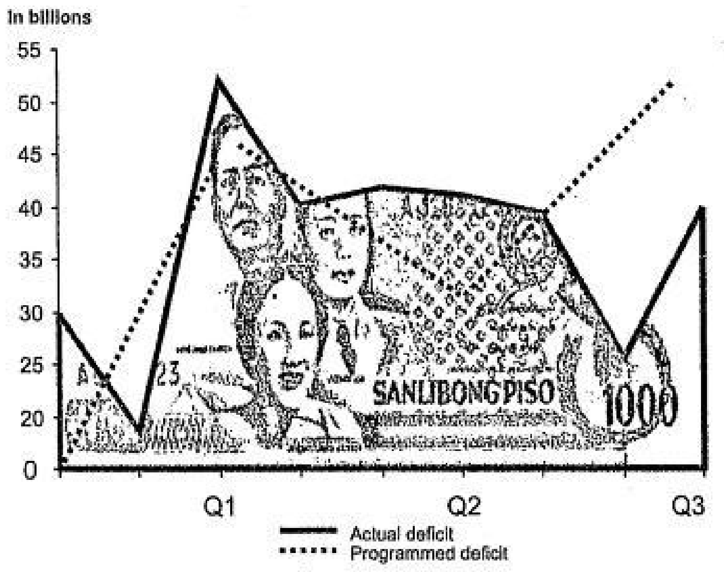
OFWS/ B5

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Government's fiscal deficit at P40 B (January-September 2007)

After registering surpluses in five of the first nine months of the year, the national government's fiscal surplus of P40 billion for the first three quarters is P14 billion lower than the programmed ceiling for the period.



Source: Bureau of Treasury
Kate Pedroso Inquirer Research

Shimao to pursue $2-B investment in RP, BCDA says

By Ronnel W. Domingo

CHINESE REAL ESTATE GIANT Shanghai Shimao group is expected to submit to the Bases Conversion Development Authority within two weeks a final proposal for its planned $2-billion investment in Bonifacio Global City.

BCDA president and chief executive Narciso L. Abaya said Shimao maintained a keen interest in two properties at the former military base—the 7-hectare North Bonifacio lots and the Jusmag area further south in Taguig City.

Covering at least 35 hectares, the Jusmag housing area was recently repossessed following a long-drawn ownership dispute with retired Armed Forces officials who were evicted from the area.

The Shimao group had approached BCDA earlier this year regarding a joint venture for its plans to invest in high-end hotels, condominiums, offices and a commercial complex.

Abaya said that BCDA would consider whether to go through a Swiss challenge once Shimao sends in its proposal.

He explained that joint venture agreements for both properties would go through a bidding or a modified bidding such as a Swiss challenge, following a government policy that requires a competitive process for the selection of JVA partners.

In an interview in September, Abaya said the National Economic and Devel-

SHIMAO/ B5

IN THIS ISSUE
▨ **Water firms must** pay taxes, BIR says /B2
▨ **No Free Lunch:** Unsustainable lifestyles /B2

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Water firms must pay taxes, BIR says

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue is set to issue a circular saying that local water districts (LWDs) should pay taxes like any other business entity.

In a draft revenue memorandum circular, the BIR said LWDs are classified as government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) and are put up to earn profit.

As such, they are covered by the Tax Code, BIR said, contrary to claims by the water districts.

The tax collecting agency cited a Court of Tax Appeals decision on Oct. 9, 2007 on a case filed by Silang Water District, which said that the LWD must pay taxes to the BIR.

To be exempted from tax, the BIR said an entity's income should be go to the government for the benefit of the public, such as constituents of local governments. In the case of LWDs, the BIR said, their income were not shared with the local government.

LWDs, therefore, do not meet the requirements of the Tax Code for tax exemption, the BIR said.

"Consequently, they are subject to income tax on their operation as public utilities, as well as to creditable withholding taxes prescribed to be withheld on income they received, whenever applicable," the BIR said in the draft circular.

Besides income tax, LWDs are obliged to pay other taxes, including franchise tax, value-added tax, capital gains tax on one-time transactions (such as sale of an asset), 20-percent tax on interest income from bank deposits and documentary stamp tax on papers.

The BIR made the clarification on the tax treatment of LWDs to settle the question on their liability. Many LWDs have not been paying taxes to the government because they insisted they were tax-exempt.

The BIR acknowledged that LWDs used to enjoy tax exemption as an incentive for their delivery of services to the public. But the BIR stressed that a law, Republic Act No. 7109, lifting their tax exemption privileges has been in effect since 1991.

LWDs provide water supply to about 25 million Filipinos in the countryside.

The circular to be issued by the BIR follows an earlier move to send notices of tax assessment to the LWDs.

The BIR said even the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) was not exempted from the payment of taxes on its income from concession fees.

The move to collect back taxes from LWDs came amid the BIR's collection shortfall.

The BIR collected P575.4 billion as of October, short of the target of P629.5 billion for the period.

The BIR is the biggest revenue earner among line agencies.

The BIR's collection shortfall has forced the government to maximize other sources of revenues besides taxes, such as privatization proceeds.

The government has sold various big-ticket assets to help limit the budget deficit this year to only P63 billion.

Unsustainable lifestyles

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

AS THE GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATORS IN the climate change conference in Bali struggled to reach an acceptable compromise late last week, four facts seemed to be widely (though not universally) accepted as underlying premises: One, climate change is happening and is a global problem. Two, global warming is causing climate change. Three, global warming is resulting from continued emission into the atmosphere of "greenhouse gases" (GHGs)—such as carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), hydrofluorocabons (HFC) and nitrous oxide (N2O)—resulting from human economic activities. And four, all countries of the world need to make tangible commitments to address the problem of climate change via reductions in GHG emissions.

Hoax?

The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) affirms the work of hundreds of scientists, including some Filipinos, making up that panel who have conducted scientific studies over the years to establish the above premises.

But there is no unanimity on these findings even within the scientific community. Some argue that climate change is not really occurring, and that it only seems so because weather disturbances have become more destructive as humans increasingly populate flood or drought-prone areas. Others claim that while global warming is indeed occurring, it is happening at too slow a pace to be alarming.

And then there is the argument that as world reserves of fossil fuel begin to dwindle, super powers need to find a convincing way to get people to control consumption so that they can maintain their own affluent lifestyles far into the future. And the global warming "hysteria" is one such convincing way.

The problem with this last argument, though, is that the Bush administration's denial that climate change and global warming are real threats seems based on the same motivation ("the American way of life is nonnegotiable"), apart from protecting big business interests.

Clear signs

Anyone who has lived for more than at least four decades would probably agree that weather patterns are not the same as they used to be. And scientific data gathered over many years bolster the more widely accepted argument that carbon emissions and global warming are happening at a pace that should alarm all of us. Graphs on rising CO2 concentration in the atmosphere, for example, show a clear break from long-term historical trends, seen only in the last few decades.

Meanwhile, scientific data also clearly show a direct link between carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and average temperatures. Evidence of rapidly shrinking polar ice caps, ice glaciers and snow caps on mountains is also unmistakable.

Former US Vice President Al Gore's film "The Inconvenient Truth" and other similar documentaries (e.g., "The Eleventh Hour" narrated by "Titanic" star Leonardo DiCaprio) have documented the scientific evidence quite graphically. For those who assembled in Bali in the past two weeks, whether from government or nongovernment sectors, no further proof is needed.

Focal points

CO2 and other GHG emissions come primarily from the burning of fossil fuels (i.e., petroleum) in power generation, industrial processes and operation of motor vehicles. Atmospheric CO2 also rises when there is large-scale destruction of forests (all of us learned in grade school that plants use up CO2 and emit oxygen). Agricultural processes, such as burning of rice stalks, also emit methane and nitrous oxide, which are likewise emitted from the natural degradation of various wastes. All these come from escalating economic production, especially with the accompanying rise in energy consumption.

This is why the United States, Europe and China are the key focal points in the climate change debates. The United States is the runaway largest emitter of GHGs. And yet it also continues to be the biggest recalcitrant in the efforts to set targets for reducing GHG emissions, both under the 10-year-old Kyoto Protocol, and in the Bali negotiations.

Australia, which under former Prime Minister John Howard had joined Bush in rejecting the Kyoto Protocol, has elected a new leader who has promptly reversed this stand.

Emerging emitters

Apart from the United States, the world is watching Asia, home of many rapidly growing economies and emerging to be the focal point of the global economy in the 21st century. The problem is that energy consumption and the resulting GHG emissions grow at least twice as fast as the growth of the economies themselves.

The Philippines has been no exception. And it's easy to see why. Our motor vehicle sales grew 27 percent over the past year, and grew annually at about 40-50 percent in the 1990s. Electrical appliance sales grew at an average annual rate of 30 percent in the 1990s. Residential electric power consumption has grown at about 15 percent annually. All this while our economic growth has just ranged within 4-7 percent.

It has been estimated that we would need nine Earths to sustain the world's rapidly growing energy appetite at its current pace. Clearly, business cannot go on as usual, and there is a need for a significant change in lifestyles, whether in the large affluent economies or in emerging economies like ours and that of our Asian neighbors.

If each one of us does our share now, it all adds up to making the future better for our children and grandchildren. And as a new grandfather myself, I'd certainly do mine.

Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu.

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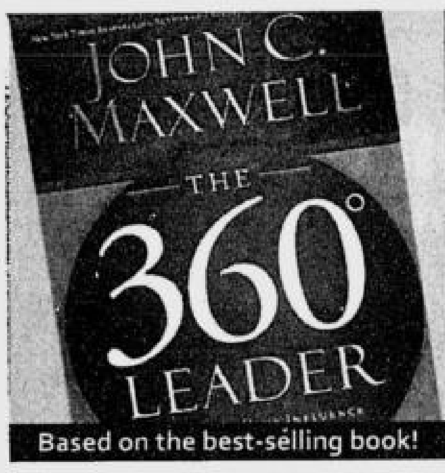

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ANTHONY PANGILINAN
Anthony Pangilinan is Director and Chief Trainer of Inspire Leadership Consultancy, Inc. He was adjudged "best facilitator" in the April 2005 Developing the Leader Within You Train-the-Trainer Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia. He is also Chairman of the Board and Chief Disturber of BusinessWorks and EVP of The PLDT Foundation, Inc.

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Gov't adopts ₱42-45:$1 rate for '08

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED an exchange rate of P42-45 to a US dollar as basis for the setting of its fiscal program, economic targets and policies next year.

The exchange rate assumption, which took into account the unexpected sharp rise of the peso this year, was approved last Friday by the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC).

The DBCC's technical board was said to have assumed an economic growth target of between 6.3 percent and 7 percent, in terms of gross domestic product, for next year.

In terms of the peso-dollar rate, the mid-point of a projected range is normally used. For next year, therefore, an exchange rate assumption of P43 to $1 will be taken into account in drafting the fiscal program.

The DBCC's exchange rate forecast for next year took note of the projection made by the National Economic and Development Authority that the peso would remain strong next year at 43 to a dollar.

Acting Neda Director General Augusto Santos said that with the better-than-expected growth of the economy this year, investments were expected to rise next year. Higher investments would help further strengthen the peso.

The peso recently broke into the 41-to-a-dollar territory, appreciating by more than 19 percent from January to mid-December from year-ago level. The sharp rise of the peso made it the strongest performing Asian currency so far this year, according to analysts.

Santos and officials from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said the strong peso was the reason inflation remained benign this year despite increases in the prices of oil in the world market.

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REMITTANCES FROM FILIPINOS OVERSEAS

BSP expects GIR to climb to a record $37B in '08

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS EXpects the country's foreign exchange reserves to climb to a record $37 billion next year, but it also sees the balance of payments surplus shrinking to $3-$3.5 billion.

In a briefing Friday night, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the Philippines would likely end this year with $33 billion in gross international reserves (GIR) and a record BOP surplus of $8-$8.5 billion.

"We expect sustained surpluses in the external accounts next year, although not in amounts as big as those recorded in 2007," Tetangco said.

"The increases would still be due mainly to strong current account balances driven by remittances from overseas Filipinos," he added.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world.

The GIR, on the other hand, is a key indicator of a country's ability to cover the economy's foreign exchange requirements.

The assumption of a smaller BOP surplus next year was based on a less favorable global environment marked by high oil and other commodity prices, slower demand from western economies - especially the United States - and a prolonged turbulence in the global financial markets given the credit crunch in the United States.

The BSP also took into account the high BOP surplus to be recorded this year.

Given these factors, Tetangco said the BSP had adopted a conservative external accounts outlook.

"It also assumes that a large part of the inflows will remain with commercial banks to service the requirements of their clients and, therefore, won't be reflected as a BOP surplus," Tetangco explained.

The BSP, which started to ease foreign exchange (forex) outflow restrictions early this year, is expected to complete the second wave of post-Asian currency crisis forex liberalization moves this week.

A major component in this second phase is the removal of some restrictions on overseas investments, particularly by qualified institutional investors or those considered to possess the expertise and financial muscle to invest in global capital markets.

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AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur C. Yap (3rd from left) tries the Extended Hot Water Treatment (EHWT) facility of the Pangasinan Tropical Fruits Multipurpose Cooperative (PTFMC), which was funded under DA's High Value Commercial Crops (HVCC) Program.

ERC issues final regulations on switching of customers

By Abigail L. Ho

IN PREPARATION FOR THE IMPLEMENTAtion of retail competition and open access, the Energy Regulatory Commission has issued its Rules on Customer Switching (RCS), which would pave the way for the smooth transfer of customers from one electricity supplier to another.

The RCS will cover the commercial transfer of "contestable customers"—referring to the big power consumers—from one power supplier to another. The rules will also facilitate the exchange of customer information among competing electricity providers.

"The RCS is another major step towards the restructuring and modernization of the Philippines' electric power industry. Customer switching will make use of state-of-the-art technology called Business to Business Information Technology (B2B IT) that will serve as the nerve center for facilitating customer switching arrangements, information transfers and settlement processes for the competitive retail market participants," ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said.

The regulatory body said the B2B IT infrastructure would handle the exchange of information among competitive retail market participants.

The system would likewise keep track of the movement of end-users in the contestable market, the ERC added.

The RCS protects the welfare of both the electricity end-users and suppliers, as switching can only take place at the end of a billing period and never within the billing cycle, according to the ERC.

"The RCS is a clear indication that customers are to be provided with choice. The RCS will ensure the smooth transition to a competitive environment and promote the interest of all stakeholders in the electric power industry," Albano said.

Bank lending rose 7.1% in Oct. on robust economy

BANK LENDING EXPANDED BY 7.1 PERcent year-on-year in October to match the domestic economy's robust performance.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said in a briefing that lending to all sectors of the economy - save for manufacturing—expanded in October versus the same month last year.

The increase in lending was channeled mainly to the following sectors: financial institutions (excluding lending to the central bank); real estate and business services; community and social services, transportation, storage and communication; and wholesale and retail trade, Tetangco said.

After five months of contraction, lending to the electricity, gas and water sector rose by 6.2 percent while the 11-month slowdown in lending to the mining and quarrying sector came to an end with the 6.7 percent growth in October.

On the other hand, the growth in lending to the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector softened to 0.7 percent from the 3.6-percent rise the previous month.

"Bank lending activity supports the investment and working capital requirements of a growing economy. It is also a major driver of domestic liquidity," Tetangco said.

"Monetary authorities will, therefore, continue to promote conditions and support measures that are conducive to financial intermediation, while remaining mindful that credit and monetary conditions are kept consistent with noninflationary growth," he said.

The BSP's loan growth report covered outstanding loans of commercial banks, thrift banks and rural banks, excluding placements in the central bank's short-term borrowings (reverse repurchase agreements).

Including lending to the BSP, the banking system's total loan portfolio grew at a slower pace of 3.2 percent year-on-year in October from the 4.8 percent revised growth in September as banks' placements in the BSP's overnight borrowings declined with the migration of funds to high-yielding special deposit accounts (SDAs).

Unlike the uncollateralized SDAs, placements in the BSP's overnight borrowings are counted as part of the lending portfolio.

Since May this year, the BSP has transformed the SDAs into a more powerful tool to mop up excess liquidity, likewise opening up access to government corporations as well as banks' trust departments.

Doris C. Dumlao

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Debt restructuring deal with John Hay firm OKd

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BASES CONVERSION DEVELOPment Authority has agreed to a new restructuring deal for the P2.2 billion worth of arrears of Camp John Hay Development Corp., the private developer of the former US military facility in Baguio City.

The amount represents the rental fees for Camp John Hay over the last 10 years that CJHDevCo failed to pay.

The BCDA said it had agreed to the deal with the John Hay developer given the expected signing of an agreement with a "significant" locator within this month.

Narciso L. Abaya, BCDA president and chief executive, said the deal would allow CJHDevCo to pay P150 million a year for the next 15 years. It would be signed before the end of this year.

Abaya said CJHDevCo was expected to enter into an agreement with a locator, which was seen to be the source of about half of the yearly payment.

"I cannot name this locator yet but this company has agreed to assign to the BCDA about (P75 million) yearly," he added.

The BCDA chief said further the agency would simultaneously sign all the agreements concerning the three-way arrangement within two weeks.

This development pushed further the prospects of encouraging more investors to do business in the former US military facility following a 25-year lease agreement signed with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority in January, which covers part of the Camp John Hay property in Baguio City.

Presidential Proclamation No. 1191 issued in December 2005 designated the 301.86-hectare John Hay Special Economic Zone as a special tourism economic zone.

According to BCDA subsidiary John Hay Management Corp., the lease covered a 6.5-hectare lot that Peza would offer as expansion areas for existing locators as well as sites for new investors at the state-run Baguio City Economic Zone.

The lease contract was signed while the BCDA was locked on an impasse with CJHDevCo over the arrears.

The matter is currently pending in court and Calde declined to discuss it, citing a restraining order from the judiciary.

The dispute put sub-lessees of land under a separate lease agreement with CJHDevCo in a quandary over a March 2005 Supreme Court decision that voided a provision of Presidential Proclamation No. 420 which granted tax exemptions and financial incentives to the John Hay SEZ.

Inflation seen at 3.5% in '09

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS expects a slowdown in the country's inflation rate in the next two years despite continuing risks from rising oil and commodity prices.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. announced on Friday an inflation rate target of 3.5 percent for 2009, lower than the 4 percent target for next year.

Under the central bank's targeting system, a leeway equivalent to one percentage point up and below (plus or minus) the exact inflation target for each year is allowed. This means the inflation rate range for 2009 would be wider at 2.5 percent to 4.5 percent and for 2008, 3-5 percent.

Tetangco also said that in line with the favorable inflation outlook, growth in broad money supply would likely be kept below the 20 percent indicative growth level.

"We will manage liquidity in a way consistent with the inflation target and economic growth of the Philippines. I think we'll still be below 20 percent (m3 or domestic liquidity growth)," he said.

An inflation-targeting central bank means monetary management, such as any decision to hike or cut short-term interest rates or adjust bank reserves, is based on the actual inflation path and not just on growth of liquidity in the financial system. *Doris C. Dumlao*

OFWs seen . . .

From page B1

ductive way for millions of Filipinos working abroad to send in money.

The so-called leakage in the Philippine remittance pipeline has gone down from as high as 20 to 30 percent about two to three years ago.

Asked whether he thought the country could sustain increases in the deployment of workers abroad, Tetangco said global demand for Filipino manpower remained very strong.

"It depends on whether we can train more people," he said. "We need to train manpower, there's a demand."

Based on the latest data from the BSP, money sent home by overseas Filipinos through banks surged by 17.1 percent year-on-year to hit an all-time high of $1.4 billion in October.

The BSP attributed this development to the increase in deployment of workers abroad, as well as improved remittance channels.

This brought the 10-month remittances from overseas Filipino workers to $11.9 billion—up by 15.2 percent from last year.

For the full year, however, Tetangco projected only a growth of 12 percent in banking remittances.

Shimao . . .

From page B1

opment Authority was working on the terms of reference on how to enter into JVAs.

Last May, Abaya said Shimao chair Hui Wing Mao personally reiterated his firm interest in investing at the former Fort Bonifacio during a meeting with BCDA officials in Hong Kong that month.

He said Shimao was a world-class, fast paced developer that could finish a 900-room twin-tower luxury hotel in 18 months, as what they did with the Hyatt Hotel at the Bund in Shanghai.

Abaya, along with BCDA chair Aloysius Santos, went to Hong Kong to return a visit Hui made in March, during which the two parties signed an agreement for joint development of a sizable lot at Bonifacio Global City.

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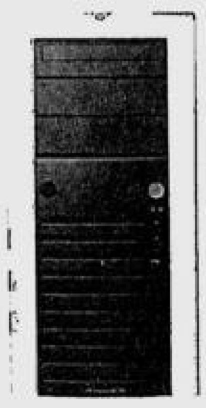

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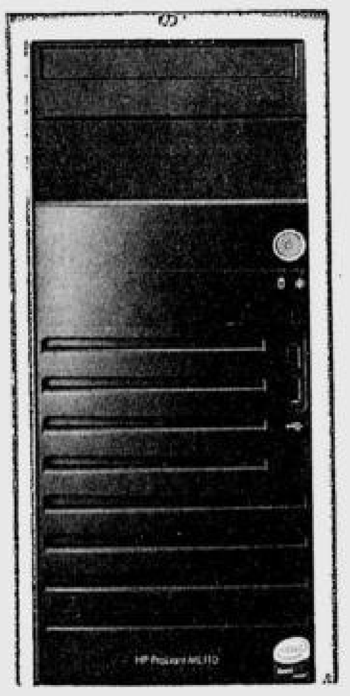

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Bangko Sentral eases rules on interlocking positions

Limits kept to prevent unfair competition

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas has relaxed certain restrictions on interlocking directorships and "officerships" among regulated financial institutions to allow better resource-sharing, especially among related companies.

However, prudential limits were kept to prevent self-dealing, unfair competitive advantage as well as excessive concentration of economic power in few individuals, BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision Nestor Espenilla Jr. said on Friday.

He said that after a review of the existing rules, the Monetary Board had approved the following:

- To allow concurrent directorships between a quasi-bank and a nonbank financial institution without prior MB approval;
- To allow concurrent directorship and officership between a quasi-bank and a nonbank financial institution but subject to prior MB approval;
- Officers can be seconded by a parent company to a subsidiary or affiliate—usually in the case of mergers and acquisitions—but prior MB approval is required, and,
- Exempt representatives of government and government-owned and -controlled corporations from these rules but only their interlocking positions were provided under existing laws.

"Interlocking allows companies to monitor and save on investments, to share professional and management expertise, as well a provides access to material money and information. It also helps concerned firms achieve economies of scale," Espenilla said.

"But the other part of it, why we regulate it and not freely allow interlocking is that you need to regulate self-dealing, self-interest and unfair competitive advantage. Also, if there are too many responsibilities, it could lead to poor governance," he explained.

Rules on interlocking positions, Espenilla said, were likewise needed to prevent a contagion in case an affiliate or sister company gets into trouble.

San Miguel eyes coal mining projects overseas

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

UNDAUNTED BY THE RESULTS OF THE recent bidding for National Transmission Corp. (Transco) franchise, San Miguel Corp. is now training its sights on possible coal mining investments abroad.

The coal project may be implemented through San Miguel Energy, a wholly-owned subsidiary for potential power investments.

"Coal investments give you return on equity of 30-50 percent," a source said.

The source could not immediately disclose which countries were being considered for the coal mining project.

Bloomberg reported this month that benchmark coal prices climbed to a record high this year on disruption of supplies from Australia, the world's biggest coal exporter.

San Miguel Energy and its foreign partners lost the Transco concession to the group of Monte Oro Grid Resources of businessmen Walter Brown and Enrique Razon for the Transco in a bidding last week.

San Miguel has beefed up its war chest by $2.9 billion with the recent sale of its Australian investments.

As of the first half, San Miguel's cash and cash equivalent holdings stood at P18.19 billion.

San Miguel said it was selling its entire stake in Australian dairy giant National Foods Ltd. to Japanese conglomerate and partner Kirin Holdings Co. Ltd. for $2.6 billion (Australian $2.8 billion). Kirin owns 19.9 percent in San Miguel.

San Miguel also said it had signed a definitive agreement to sell its premium Tasmanian brewer J. Boag & Son to listed Australian alcoholic beverages firm Lion Nathan Ltd. for roughly $300 million (A$325 million).

Kirin owns 46 percent of Lion Nathan.

San Miguel's divestment tack has raised fresh funds for its planned foray into the power sector and other high-growth sectors.

Maybank

Currencies

December 14, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.683340	1.000000	41.1420
Japan	Yen	0.006093	0.008916	0.3668
United Kingdom	Pound	1.396064	2.043000	84.0531
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.087651	0.128268	5.2772
Switzerland	Franc	0.598948	0.876501	36.0610
Canada	Dollar	0.669548	0.979816	40.3116
Singapore	Dollar	0.474476	0.694348	28.5669
Australia	Dollar	0.598948	0.876501	36.0610
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.823456	2.668446	109.7852
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.182614	0.267237	10.9947
Brunei	Dollar	0.472834	0.691946	28.4680
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000073	0.000107	0.0044
Thailand	Baht	0.022680	0.033190	1.3655
UAE	Dirham	0.186095	0.272331	11.2042
EU	Euro	1.000000	1.463400	60.2072
Korea	Won	0.000739	0.001082	0.0445
China	Yuan**	0.092729	0.135700	5.5830
Denmark	Kroner	0.134006	0.196105	8.0682
India	Rupee	0.017357	0.025400	1.0450
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.206385	0.302024	12.4259
New Zealand	Dollar	0.533568	0.780823	32.1246
Sweden	Kroner	0.106153	0.155345	6.3912
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.021123	0.030912	1.2718

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY time—Dec. 13, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.
** Asian time closing rate as of Dec. 13, 2007

Correction seen to continue

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the current correction may be prolonged," BPI Securities wrote in a daily report. "However, we do expect buying to resurface once the index nears 3,450."

AB Capital Securities meanwhile wrote in a weekly note that the market may still turn to market developments abroad, and also track the central bank's move when it meets on Dec. 20 to determine the key interest rates. But a rate cut is not expected to boost the market in a big way.

"So far, the Bangko Sentral has followed the decision of the US Federal Reserve the last two times it met," AB Capital Securities wrote. "However, it will be hard pressed to do so again (this) week. A rate cut by the Fed always gives the BSP room to cut its own rates."

The broker also said that a higher inflation rate of 3.2 percent for November will be a detriment to possible interest rate cuts.

"Historically, rate cuts serve as positive catalysts that enable the market to move up," AB Capital Securities said. "Even if the BSP decides to cut its rates next week, it may not affect the market too much. Similar to last November's rate cut, local investors may focus more on external factors." *Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 14, 2007)

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
		BANKS					
17.5	6.8	Asiatrust Development Bank Inc.	8.6	8.6	8.4	8.6	271,000
73	43.5	Banco de Oro-EPCI Inc.	59	60	59	59.5	789,500
73.5	53	Bank of the Philippine Islands	63	63	61.5	61.5	1,236,400
748	544	China Banking Corp.	655	655	655	655	1,950
23.5	14	Citystate Savings Bank	23	23	23	23	100,000
0.63	0.36	Export and Industry Bank Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	3,500,000
75.5	47.5	Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.	56	56	55	55	2,610,700
65.5	39	Philippine National Bank	49.5	49.5	48.5	48.5	585,800
68	47	Philippine Savings Bank	60	60.5	60	60	1,500
39.57	20.43	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	25	25	24.25	24.5	251,200
90	63.5	Security Bank Corp.	75.5	75.5	75	75.5	142,700
66	42	Union Bank of the Philippines	45	45	44	44.5	850,500
		OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
5.6	1.92	ATR KimEng Financial Corp.	4	4	4	4	65,000
2.22	0.6	Bankard Inc.	1.94	1.94	1.86	1.86	437,000
16.25	4.6	CitisecOnline.com Inc.	11.25	11.25	11	11.25	202,300
1.6	0.5	First Abacus Financial Holdings Corp.	1	1	1	1	20,000
42.5	29	First Metro Investment Corp.	42.5	42.5	42.5	42.5	400
5.9	4.8	I-Remit Inc.	4.85	4.85	4.8	4.8	216,000
3.8	1.74	Makati Finance Corp.	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.8	57,000
1,970.00	1,580.00	Manulife Financial Corp.	1,600.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	1,240
5	2.7	National Reinsurance Corp. of the Phils.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	1,291,000
1,390.00	265	The Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.	1,050.00	1,050.00	1,025.00	1,030.00	20,010
2,500.00	1,970.00	Sun Life Financial Inc.	2,150.00	2,150.00	2,150.00	2,150.00	160
1.94	1.3	iVantage Corp.	1.78	1.78	1.6	1.6	9,376,000
		ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
6.2	3.8	Aboitiz Power Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.2	11,870,000
0.57	0.22	East Asia Power Resources Corp.	0.42	0.43	0.38	0.42	150,000
70.5	49	First Gen Corp.	60.5	61	60.5	61	364,100
92	58	First Phil. Holdings Corp.	72	72	70	70	1,963,200
18.5	8.8	Manila Water Co. Inc.	17.75	17.75	17.5	17.5	1,923,400
105.45	47.73	Manila Electric Co.	84	84	80	80.5	1,842,300
7.8	4.1	PNOC Energy Development Corp.	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8	9,864,000
7.4	3.95	Petron Corp.	6	6	5.8	5.8	2,562,000
14.75	6.4	Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc.	6.8	6.9	6.6	6.6	84,000
2.04	0.94	Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Dev't Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.28	1.28	3,267,000
		FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
6.3	3.4	Alaska Milk Corp.	4.85	4.85	4.85	4.85	147,000
2.32	1.48	Alliance Tuna International Inc.	1.54	1.56	1.5	1.52	606,000
2.2	1.08	CADP Group Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	10,000
61	40.5	Jollibee Foods Corp.	49	49	48	48	625,000
9.1	5.7	Pancake House Inc.	8.8	9	8.8	9	35,000
3.1	2.06	Roxas Holdings	2.85	2.85	2.8	2.85	567,000
80	42.5	San Miguel Corp. "A"	58	60.5	58	60	619,200
88	43	San Miguel Corp. "B"	58.5	61	58	60.5	2,918,400
20.75	13.5	Universal Robina Corp.	14.25	14.25	14	14	1,348,600
0.55	0.24	Vitarich Corp.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	60,000
		CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
6.1	2.65	EEI Corp.	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2	121,000
21.5	6	Federal Resources Investment Group Inc.	10	11	10	10.5	1,044,000
9.2	4.95	Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.9	161,000
7	3.65	Republic Cement Corp.	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	400,000
2	0.81	Southeast Asia Cement Holdings Inc.	1.02	1.02	1	1	2,049,000
23	2.12	TKC Steel Corp.	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	146,000
		CHEMICALS					
6.3	3.75	Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.15	4.15	4.1	4.15	110,000
1.46	0.51	Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	10,000
		DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
0.75	0.185	Picop Resources Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	6,100,000
9	6.2	Splash Corp.	8.2	8.4	7.9	8	4,784,000
		HOLDING FIRMS					
39	18.75	ABS-CBN Holdings Corp.-PDR	34	34	34	34	75,100
3.9	2.7	A. Soriano Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	30,000
0.185	0.0575	AJO.net Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.12	0.125	40,860,000
1.28	0.3	APC Group Inc.	0.62	0.62	0.6	0.6	5,440,000
3.65	1.5	ATN Holdings Inc. "A"	2.42	2.44	2.4	2.42	249,000
0.018	0.0075	Abacus Cons. Res. and Hold'gs Inc. "A"	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	3,000,000
9.7	5.8	Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc.	7	7	7	7	10,964,000
0.021	0.0095	Alcorn Gold Resources Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	200,000
7.3	3.5	Alliance Global Group Inc.	5.4	5.4	5.2	5.2	286,000
1.38	0.6	Alsons Consolidated Resources Inc.	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.81	10,000
2.9	0.95	Anglo-Philippine Holdings Corp.	2.36	2.38	2.32	2.36	7,876,000
8	0.8	Aries Prime Resources Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	10,000
645	400	Ayala Corp.	555	555	535	535	336,810
15.25	7.83	Bacnotan Consolidated Industries Inc.	13	13	13	13	3,000
5.8	2.14	Benpres Holdings Corp.	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	884,000
12	5.6	DMCI Holdings Inc.	9.5	9.5	9.4	9.5	20,435,000
8	3.5	Filinvest Development Corp.	6.2	6.2	6.1	6.1	33,000
3.55	1.76	House of Investments Inc.	2	2	2	2	132,000
14.5	8.9	JG Summit Holdings Inc.	10.25	10.25	10	10	36,000
5.9	0.61	Jolliville Holdings Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	8,000
28	1.42	Lodestar Investment Hldgs Corp.	18.75	18.75	17.75	18	60,800
0.95	0.28	Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	100,000
11.5	1.5	Minerales Industrias Corp.	6.8	7	6.5	6.5	3,496,000
8.5	3	PAL Holdings Inc.	6.6	6.6	6.3	6.3	32,000
0.28	0.016	Pacifica Inc. "A"	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.225	95,250,000
1.54	0.62	Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	230,000
0.75	0.19	Prime Orion Philippines Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.53	0.53	2,210,000
452.5	282.92	SM Investments Corp.	350	350	342.5	345	694,370
2.1	1.08	Seafront Resources Corp.	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.26	263,000
0.73	0.15	Sinophil Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	2,610,000
1.06	0.61	Solid Group Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	60,000
2	0.92	South China Resources Inc.	1.48	1.48	1.48	1.48	83,000
2.9	0.93	Vivant Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.2	1.2	5,000
0.75	0.12	Wellex Industries Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.3	4,830,000
		PROPERTY					
2.38	1	A Brown Co. Inc.	2.3	2.38	1.98	1.98	29,344,000
8.9	5	Anchor Land Holdings Inc	7.1	7.4	7.1	7.3	20,000
19.25	12.08	Ayala Land Inc.	15.5	15.5	14.75	14.75	23,111,800
1.88	1	Belle Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.16	1.2	1,750,000
4.7	3.15	Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.6	3.6	125,000
2.04	1.56	Cebu Property Venture and Dev't Corp "A"	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	3,000
2.06	1.7	Cebu Property Venture and Dev't Corp."B"	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	66,000
0.86	0.4	Crown Equities Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	110,000
0.83	0.24	Cyber Bay Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.37	0.37	6,940,000
0.99	0.53	Empire East Land Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.81	0.81	55,010,000
6.9	1.1	Eton Properties Philippines Inc.	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	244,000
0.47	0.0575	Ever Gotesco Resources and Hold'gs Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	1,700,000
1.48	0.61	Fil-Estate Land Inc.	1	1	0.98	0.99	2,420,000
2.44	1.32	Filinvest Land Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.38	1.4	73,642,000
1.12	0.31	MRC Allied Industries Inc.	0.58	0.59	0.56	0.59	410,000
4.6	2.2	Megaworld Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.85	38,525,000
6.4	1.5	Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	30,000
5.2	2.2	Metro Pacific Investments Corp-Warrants	2.65	2.9	2.65	2.7	209,000
0.7	0.135	Phil. Estates Corp.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	200,000
0.86	0.32	Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.55	0.56	0.48	0.48	15,140,000
9.2	1.7	Polar Property Holdings Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	51,000
23	14.5	Robinson Land Corp.	16.25	16.25	15.5	15.75	8,967,400
5.9	2.05	SM Development Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.85	3.85	132,000
13.5	7.84	SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10.5	10.5	10	10	24,918,700
3.25	1.5	Shang Properties Inc.	2.18	2.2	2.18	2.18	810,000
4.5	0.38	Sta. Lucia Land Inc.	1.94	2	1.84	1.84	2,240,000
1.34	0.46	Suntrust Home Developers Inc.	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	290,000
0.49	0.0975	Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.24	5,150,000
7.5	3.65	Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	3,315,000
		MEDIA					
38.5	18.75	ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	21,000
12	7.6	GMA Holdings Inc.	8.2	8.3	8.2	8.2	246,000
11.75	7.5	GMA Network Inc.	7.9	8	7.9	7.9	1,101,000
		TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
2.12	1.1	Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc.	1.42	1.42	1.4	1.42	7,863,000
1,750.00	1,180.00	Globe Telecom Inc.	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,480.00	1,480.00	63,080
3,285.00	2,250.00	Phil. Long Distance Telephone Co.	3,015.00	3,015.00	2,995.00	3,000.00	183,460
8.1	5.5	Pilipino Telephone Corp.	7	7	6.9	7	2,289,000
		INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
15.75	2.1	Diversified Financial Network Inc.	14.5	14.5	14	14	541,400
11.5	3.55	IPVG Corp.	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.7	522,000
0.065	0.027	ISM Communications Corp.	0.038	0.038	0.037	0.038	16,300,000
5	1.62	Information Capital Tech. Ventures Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	20,000
0.32	0.05	Island Information and Technology Inc.	0.175	0.18	0.175	0.175	6,230,000
2.26	1.1	Music Semiconductors Corp.	2.26	2.26	2.1	2.18	5,111,000
0.0725	0.03	Philweb Corp.	0.046	0.047	0.045	0.047	31,300,000
5.4	1.64	Transpacific Broadband Group Int'l. Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	1,253,000
		TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
2.14	1.22	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	130,000
49	18.75	Int'l Container Terminal Services Inc.	44.5	44.5	44	44	670,600
2.16	0.93	Keppel Philippines Marine Inc.	2	2	2	2	100,000
2.7	1.12	Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	32,000
		HOTEL & LEISURE					
4.25	1.8	Leisure and Resorts World Corp.	2.55	2.55	2.48	2.48	364,000
1.52	0.33	Premiere Entertainment Productions Inc.	1.32	1.36	1.26	1.28	5,230,000
1.2	0.55	Waterfront Philippines Inc.	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86	1,400,000
		EDUCATION					
3.7	2.6	iPeople Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	[illegible]
		DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
43	6.6	JTH Davies Holdings Inc.	29	29.5	29	29	11,600
6	2.04	Macroasia Corp.	4.7	4.75	4.7	4.7	1,601,000
17.25	9.8	Pacific Online Systems Corp.	10.75	10.75	10.5	10.5	632,100
30	5.8	Paxys Inc.	6.3	6.3	5.8	5.9	1,140,000
472.5	380	eTelecare Global Solutions Inc.	390	390	380	382.5	7,320
		MINING					
0.017	0.0085	Abra Mining and Industrial Corp.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	53,000,000
7.2	3.6	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "A"	6.2	6.2	6.1	6.2	444,000
7.4	3.85	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "B"	6.7	6.7	6.6	6.7	298,000
21.25	8.1	Atlas Cons. Mining and Dev't Corp.	13.25	13.5	13.25	13.25	862,000
20.75	8.9	Benguet Corp. "A"	19.75	20	19.25	19.5	281,100
12.75	1.98	Dizon Copper Silver Mines Inc.	9.2	9.8	9.2	9.3	21,000
3.1	0.6	GEOGRACE Resources Philippines Inc.	2	2.06	1.88	1.88	67,023,000
0.56	0.18	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. "A"	0.51	0.51	0.49	0.5	46,890,000
0.61	0.22	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. "B"	0.55	0.55	0.52	0.52	17,280,000
0.038	0.017	Manila Mining Corp. "A"	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	64,600,000
0.041	0.02	Manila Mining Corp. "B"	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	5,500,000
30	3.6	NIHAO Minerals Resources Int'l Inc.	21.25	21.25	20	20	678,200
0.021	0.0088	Omico Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	400,000
0.015	0.007	Omico Corp.-Warrants	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	2,000,000
11.25	3.5	Philex Mining Corp.	9.7	9.7	9.6	9.7	3,168,000
49.5	14.75	Semirara Mining Corp.	44	44.5	43.5	43.5	46,800
1.36	0.65	United Paragon Mining Corp.	0.72	0.75	0.72	0.75	840,000
1.8	0.99	Vulcan Industrial and Mining Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	693,000
		OIL					
0.58	0.27	Basic Energy Corp.	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.31	3,270,000
0.029	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. "A"	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.024	56,300,000
0.03	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. "B"	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.026	29,300,000
13.75	9	Petroenergy Resources Corp.	10	10.75	10	10.25	291,000
0.032	0.0097	The Philodrill Corp.	0.029	0.029	0.028	0.029	751,700,000

AVERAGES			VOLUME	VALUE
Financial	858.33 DOWN	12.35	21,970,360	405,389,685.00
Industrial	4,405.82 DOWN	59.61	55,751,200	813,973,100.00
Holding Firms	1,967.56 DOWN	70.54	200,716,980	776,254,135.00
Property	1,492.64 DOWN	71.83	294,664,900	1,147,867,700.00
Service	1,804.59 DOWN	26.51	84,166,560	773,152,085.00
Mining & Oil	8,340.36 DOWN	122.67	1,102,886,100	261,393,505.00
All Shares Index	2,176.41 DOWN	45.07		
PSEi	3,538.69 DOWN	87.52		
		GRAND TOTALS	1,760,156,100	4,178,030,210.00

COMPILED BY SCHATZI QUODALA, INQUIRER RESEARCH
SOURCE: TECHNISTOCK, PSE

GG&A Club Shares
SEC License Broker No.: BD-00131
Announcement
We are now located at:
2nd Floor, Goodland Bldg. (formerly National Steel Bldg),
377 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City
Tel No.: 890.GOLF (4653)* 0917.8043072 ; Fax No. 896.1931
Quotation as of December 17, 2007

CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
ALABANG COUNTRY CLUB "A"	1,100,000	1,000,000
ALABANG COUNTRY CLUB "B"	1,200,000	-
BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	600,000	550,000
CAMP JOHN HAY	300,000	260,000
CANLUBANG	470,000	430,000
CAPITOL HILLS	40,000	-
CEBU COUNTRY CLUB	-	2,100,000
CELEBRITY SPORTS CLUB	100,000	80,000
CLUB FILIPINO	120,000	90,000
EAGLERIDGE "A"	160,000	140,000
EAGLERIDGE "B"	250,000	200,000
EAGLERIDGE "C"	350,000	300,000
FOREST HILLS "A"	100,000	80,000
LUISITA GOLF "A"	300,000	250,000
MAKATI SPORTS CLUB "A"	250,000	200,000
MAKATI SPORTS CLUB "B"	300,000	220,000
MANILA GOLF (CORP)	23,000,000	20,000,000
MANILA GOLF (IND)	21,000,000	19,000,000
MANILA POLO	5,000,000	4,700,000
MANILA SOUTHWOODS "A"	300,000	250,000
MANILA SOUTHWOODS "B"	650,000	630,000
MANILA YACHT CLUB	200,000	150,000
MIMOSA (IND)	220,000	-
MT. MALARAYAT GOLD "A"	140,000	-
ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "A"	150,000	-
ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "B"	270,000	-
ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "C"	330,000	-
QUEZON CITY SPORTS CLUB	150,000	130,000
ROCKWELL CLUB	300,000	250,000
SPA & LODGE	500,000	400,000
STA. ELENA "A"	1,900,000	1,700,000
STA. ELENA "B"	-	1,900,000
TAGAYTAY COUNTRY CLUB	320,000	290,000
TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS	670,000	630,000
TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	650,000	620,000
THE PALMS COUNTRY CLUB "A"	340,000	320,000
VALLE VERDE (IND)	90,000	75,000
VALLEY GOLF	240,000	220,000
WACK WACK GOLF CLUB	10,000,000	9,500,000

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as of December 14, 2007

CLUB	SELLING	BUYING
ALABANG B	1,200,000	PLS CALL
BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	PLS CALL	550,000
CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	PLS CALL	465,000
CELEBRITY CLUB	100,000	80,000
CLUB FILIPINO	PLS CALL	100,000
CLUB PUNTA FUEGO	350,000	PLS CALL
COUNTRY CLUB AT TAGAYTAY	PLS CALL	290,000
EAGLERIDGE A	PLS CALL	140,000
EAGLERIDGE B	230,000	PLS CALL
EAGLERIDGE C	340,000	PLS CALL
EASTRIDGE B	225,000	150,000
FOREST HILLS A	PLS CALL	70,000
FOREST HILLS C	200,000	PLS CALL
LUISITA GOLF CLUB	400,000	PLS CALL
MAKATI SPORTS CLUB A	200,000	PLS CALL
MANILA GOLF CORP	PLS CALL	20,000,000
MANILA GOLF IND	21,000,000	19,000,000
MANILA POLO CLUB	4,700,000	PLS CALL
MANILA SOUTHWOODS A	290,000	PLS CALL
MANILA SOUTHWOODS B	PLS CALL	630,000
METROCLUB A	150,000	PLS CALL
ORCHARD A	150,000	PLS CALL
ORCHARD B	300,000	PLS CALL
ORCHARD C	350,000	PLS CALL
QUEZON CITY SPORTS	140,000	120,000
RIVIERA GOLF B	150,000	120,000
RIVIERA GOLF C	200,000	PLS CALL
ROYALE TAGAYTAY B	60,000	PLS CALL
SPA & LODGE	550,000	PLS CALL
SPLENDIDO	300,000	150,000
STA ELENA A	PLS CALL	1,700,000
STA ELENA B	PLS CALL	1,900,000
SUMMIT POINT C	450,000	400,000
TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS	650,000	PLS CALL
TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	650,000	PLS CALL
THE COUNTRY CLUB	1,200,000	PLS CALL
VALLEY GOLF	220,000	PLS CALL
VALLE VERDE	100,000	80,000
WACK WACK	9,750,000	PLS CALL

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ALABANG "B"	Call now	PALMS CC	Call now	CC@TAG	300K
CALATAGAN "A"	50K	RIVIERA GOLF "C"	150K	CLUB FILIPINO	80K
CAMP JOHN HAY	300K	ROCKWELL	Call now	FOREST HILLS B	Call now
CANLUBANG	500K	SPLENDIDO	150K	MLA GOLF IND	Call now
CC@ TAG	Call now	STA ELENA "A"	1.9M	MLA POLO	Call now
EASTRIDGE "A"	150K	SUBIC BAY YACHT	Call now	H'LANDS GOLF	Call now
MLA POLO	5.0M	TAG H'LANDS	700K	VALLEY GOLF	200K
ORCHARD "A"	170K	THE COUNTRY CLUB	Call now	WACK WACK	9.0M

PARTIAL AVAILABLE LESSORS FOR PLAYING

ALABANG CC	Call Now	ORCHARD "A"	10,000
CC @ TAGAYTAY	10,000	STA. ELENA	60,000
MANILA SOUTHWOODS	15,000	TAG HIGHLANDS GOLF	35,000
MIMOSA	10,000	TAG MIDLANDS	[illegible]

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/1,200,000*	1,000,000
Alta Vista A/B*/Corp.**	-	260,000/Pls. Call*
Baguio Country Club	580,000	-
Camp John Hay	Pls. Call	250,000
Canlubang Golf	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Canyon Woods	90,000	-
Club Filipino	120,000	80,000
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	160,000/250,000*/350,000**	200,000*
Eastridge A/B*	230,000*	150,000*
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	90,000/160,000*/200,000**	50,000/150,000*
Luisita Golf A	Pls. Call	290,000/320,000*
Manila Golf Corporate	23,000,000	-
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	18,000,000
Manila Polo	5,000,000	3,900,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	300,000/Pls. Call*	250,000
Makati Sports Club A/B*	250,000	190,000
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	200,000	-
Metropolitan Club A/B*	160,000	100,000
Mimosa C1/C2*/C3**	220,000/580,000**	150,000/400,000*/500,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	180,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	160,000/250,000*/380,000**	-
Quezon City Sports Club	170,000	120,000
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	150,000*/250,000**	120,000*/130,000**
Rockwell Leisure Club	300,000	Pls. Call
Royale Tagaytay CC	65,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/130,000*	100,000*
Splendido Taal	250,000	Pls. Call
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	2,100,000/2,500,000*	1,600,000
The Palms Country Club	350,000	320,000
Tagaytay Country Club	-	280,000
Tagaytay Highlands	-	Pls. Call
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	-
Valley Golf	250,000	200,000
Valle Verde Ind.	100,000	70,000
Wack Wack Golf	Pls. Call	-

Tel. 8504151 E-mail: [illegible]
(0917)3287789 website: [illegible]

SO THE PUBLIC MAY KNOW

I. ACCORDING TO STATEMENTS MADE IN THE ORIENTAL PENINSULA PROSPECTUS, "1. The company, Oriental Peninsula Prospectus, will initially start its mining operations in Pulot Mine in Española and not in the Toronto Mine in Narra. Further, the Toronto Mine has only an area of 768 hectares, which means that PGMC is only in possession of 2.6% of the said Toronto Mines."

THE DOCUMENTED FACT:

1. Regional Trial Court of Palawan, Branch 95 Decision on Civil Case #4199 dated July 21, 2006.

   WHEREFORE, premises considered, let a writ of PRELIMINARY INJUCTION BE ISSUED directing defendant Olympic Mines and Development Corporation, its assignees and successors-in-interest Citinickel Mines and Development Corp., agents, representatives or persons or entitles acting on its behalf or under its authority, control or influence, to CEASE and DESIST from performing any act that will tend to impede, hamper, limit or adversely affect the full enjoyment by plaintiff corporation of its rights under the operating agreement such as and including, but not limited to the following:

   - Making representations of claims with any person, including the proper government agencies, that the operating agreement has already been terminated or is no longer in effect;
   - Making representations or claims with any person, including the proper government agencies, that plaintiff has violated any of defendant's rights under the operating agreement; and
   - Interfering with the possession, control and/or operation of the Pulot Nickel Mine and the Toronto Nickel Mine;
   - Performing any act which will disturb the status quo.
   - In view of the several complaints and petitions already filed by defendant and dismissed at its own instance, from filing further complaints/petitions on the basis of the alleged termination of the operating agreement.

2. Regional Trial Court of Palawan, Branch 52 Decision on Civil Case #4181 dated April 26, 2006 Plaintiff added that on July 18, 2003 plaintiff (Olympic) and defendant (Platinum) forged into an Operating Agreement allowing Platinum to explore, develop, mine and mill beneficiate the said mining areas (Toronto Nickel Mine and Pulot Nickel Mine) with a total area of 2,176.00 hectares (Annex "A"). Pursuant thereto, defendant was allowed and authorized by plaintiff to process the latter's application in the name and in behalf of plaintiff with the MGB and concerned government agencies as well as local government units.

3. Court of Appeals 11th Division on CA-G.R. SP No. 99422 dated Nov. 20, 2007.

ELEVENTH DIVISION

CITINICKEL MINES & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION,
Petitioner,

CA-G.R. SP No. 99422

Members:
GUEVARA-SALONGA, J., (Chairperson),
ROXAS, V.Q., and
GARCIA, R.R., JJ.

-versus-

JUDGE BIENVENIDAO C. BLANCAFLOR, in his capacity as Presiding Judge, Branch 95, Regional Trial Court, Puerto Princesa City and
PLATINUM GROUP METALS CORPORATION,
Respondents.

Promulgated:
____

The Fallo

WHEREFORE, for lack of merit, petition is hereby **DISMISSED**. Due to forum shopping, triple costs against herein petitioner CITINICKEL.

SO ORDERED.

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)
VICENTE Q. ROXAS
Associate Justice

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

WE CONCUR:

Tammy Ann C. Reyes-Mendillo
Division Clerk of Court
Court of Appeals

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)
J. GUEVARA-SALONGA
Associate Justice

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)
RAMON R. GARCIA
Associate Justice

II. A PAID ADVERTISEMENT FROM ORIENTAL PENINSULA DATED DECEMBER 14, 2007 states that "In denr case no 2006-02b, the panel of arbitrators of the mines and geosciences bureau of the denr (panel), which has the exclusive jurisdiction over disputes involving mining rights, ordered on october 30, 2006 cancellation of the operating agreement between pgmc and olympic mines and development corporation (predecessor- in interest of citinickel) and further declared it without force and effect. On january 8, 2007, the panel declared that its resolution cancelling the operating agreement has attained finality and therefore final and executory. Thus, in an order dated april 11, 2007 the panel of arbitrators ordered pgmc to vacate the mining areas in dispute and to cease and desist from conducting mining operations therein."

THE DOCUMENTED FACT: It follows that the October 30, 2006 Resolution cannot become final and executory – for being null and void – for violating the Writ of Preliminary Injunction previously issued by Branch 95 RTC of Puerto Princesa City pursuant to its assalled July 21, 2006 Order.

THEIR ADVERTISEMENT FURTHER STATES: "As mpsa holder, citinickel is in full possession of the mineral property contrary to the claim of pgmc. A filed validation was conducted by the mgb on the said mineral property. Further, the pse also made an ocular inspection thereon as part of the process of evaluating oriental peninsula's listing application.

CLEARLY, THIS IS A VIOLATION of the Cease and Desist Order of RTC Branch 95 which was upheld by the Court of Appeals Eleventh Division, on November 20, 2007.

PLATINUM GROUP METALS CORP

Paid Advtg

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

NOTICE OF DISPOSITION

The **NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY** is inviting offers to purchase/lease by way of sealed bids the following commercial properties on an ***"As Is - Where is"*** basis:

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	BASE PRICE/SQ.METER
I.	**FIRST OFFERING**		
	A. SALE		
001	962 sq.m. commercial lot	Kalayaan Avenue Corner Matalino St. Brgy. Central, Q.C.	PhP25,000/sq.m. or PhP24,050,0000.00
002-003	2 commercial lots, 228.32 sq.m. & 222.84 sq.m. each (For titling)	Phase II A, Karangalan Village Project, Pasig	PhP15,000/sq.m.
004-023	20 commercial lots with lot areas ranging from 307 to 518 sq.m.	Kilusang Sariling Sikap Dasmariñas Bagong Bayan Cavite	PhP5,500 to 6,000/sq.m.
024-030	7 commercial lots with lot areas ranging from 354 to 1,412 sq.m.	Area A-2 Dasmariñas Bagong Bayan, Cavite	PhP6,000 to PhP7,500/sq.m.
031-054	24 commercial lots with lot areas ranging from 1,000 to 1,229 sq.m.	Kapayapaan Ville Housing Project Canlubang, Laguna	PhP2,800 to PhP3,000/sq.m.
055	3,817 sq.m. industrial lot	Blk C4-IN, Lot 15 General Mariano Alvarez, Cavite	PhP4,000/sq.m. or PhP15,268,000.00
056	1,498 sq.m. commercial lot	Blk. 200, Lot 6 Bulihan Sites Services Project	PhP7,000/sq.m. or PhP10,486,000.00
	B. SALE OR LEASE		
	DASMARIÑAS BAGONG BAYAN, CAVITE		
057-060	4 commercial lots, 320 to 7,092 sq.m.	Area B	PhP8,000 to Php8,500/sq.m. or lease rate of PhP24.06 to PhP33.25/sqm.
061-066	6 industrial lots with 3 structures 1,136 sq.m. to 16,213 sq.m.	Area A-2	PhP4,000 to PhP6,000/sq.m. or lease rate of PhP11.75 to PhP20.00/sq.m.
067	2,952 sq.m. industrial lot	Area G-2	PhP6,500/sq.m. or lease rate of PhP21.00/sq.m.
068-075	8 industrial lots, with 2 structures 1,031 sq.m. to 9,748 sq.m.	Area D	PhP4,800 to PhP5,000/sq.m. or lease rate of PhP13.75 to PhP18.00/sq.m.
	DIAZ CASTELLAMONTE PROPERTY		
077	4 storey condominium type residential/ commercial bldg. on a 900 sq.m. lot	Otek Street corner Rizal Park South Road, Brgy. Rizal Monument, Baguio City	PhP52,983,000.00 or lease rate of PhP440,668/mo.
	C. LEASE		
078	3,066 commercial lot with 1,926 sq.m. structure (Former Kadiwa Center and leased by Guzman Institute)	Area B	Lot - PhP33.25/sq.m. Structure - PhP20.62/sq.m. or PhP141,659.00/mo.
	D. LEASE OR JOINT VENTURE ARRANGEMENT		
079	936.80 sq.m. lot with structure	Mayor Ignacio Santos St. (Formerly Banahaw St.) Cubao, Quezon City	Lot - PhP15,000/sq.m. or PhP14,052,000.00 Structure - PhP507,066.27

All properties for sale are covered with individual titles. Repayment period is a maximum of ten (10) years at an interest rate of 18% per annum.

Lease period is for a maximum of fifteen (15) years renewable for another five (5) years at the option of NHA.

For those who will participate in the public bidding, **BIDDING MATERIALS** may be secured for a non-refundable fee of PhP200.00 from the ***Commercial & Industrial Bids and Awards Committee (COINBAC), c/o CIED***, 2nd Floor, NHA Building, Elliptical Road, Q.C. For inquiry, please call Ms. Evelyn V. Ramos at the ff. tel. nos.: 922-3002, 928-4561 loc. 262263.

ACTIVITY	SCHEDULE	VENUE
A. *Submission of Pre-qualification Requirements*	Dec. 18 to 21, 2007 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	2nd Floor CIED NHA Main Office Diliman, Q.C.
B. *Pre-Bid Conference*	December 19, 2007 1:30 p.m.	Operations Center, 3rd Floor, NHA Main Office
C. *Submission of Sealed Bids*	December 27, 2007 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 nn.	Operations Center
D. *Opening of Bids*	December 27, 2007 1:30 p.m.	Operations Center

The NHA reserves the right to reject any or all offers and applications for negotiated sale/lease, or any part thereof or to waive any required formalities and accept offers/applications most advantageous to the interest of NHA.

(Sgd.) **FROILAN R. KAMPITAN**
Chairperson, COINBAC
Assistant General Manager

(PDI - Dec. 14 & 17, 2007)

OBITUARIES

"To everything there is a season,
a time for every purpose under Heaven..."
Ecclesiastes 3:1

DR. LOLITO STA. MARIA TUMBOCON

peacefully joined his Creator
on December 16, 2007 at the age of 83.

His loving wife **Linda**; children **Lilit** and **Abby Tumbocon, Teresa** and **Al Soliveres, Linda** and **Normann Cabrera, Liza** and **Butch Guevara, Eileen** and **Albert Lizares, Tony** and **Gay Tumbocon**; grandchildren; brothers **Augusto** (†), **Bishop Ciceron Tumbocon** (†); sisters **Constancia Sallador** (†), **Patria Linato** (†), **Razon Haresco** (†), **Soledad Consing, Eusebia Miraflores, Leonore Conde, Carmelita Tumbocon, Lorna Galvan**; relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Sanctuario de San Jose, Duke St., Greenhills East Subdivision, Mandaluyong, Metro Manila.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 23, 2007 at the Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila.

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Industrial Area
2 Parcels of land total
4,235 SQM located
at Sandoval St. near
Mercedes Ave., Pasig
Contact:
Atty. Jose Yap
366 1137, 366 1348
0917 842 7553

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07 URVAN
ESCAPADE
10 HOURS P1,800
WITH DRIVER
7878776 / 7964377
09213497170

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Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo)
Corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City
E-mail: recruitment@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER
The Power of Knowing

Death Notice

REBECCA SALAZAR-CARAG
Died peacefully on December 11, 2007
at the age of 65.

Her remains lie in state at #7 Malaya St.
La Loma, Quezon City.

Interment will be on December 18 at the North
Cemetery after the 2:30 pm mass at Lourdes Church,

Please call 7432768 for further details.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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PHILIPPINE RECLAMATION AUTHORITY

(Public Estates Authority)

7th floor, Legaspi Towers 200 Bldg., 107 Paseo de Roxas St.,
Legaspi Village, 1226 City of Makati
Tel. Nos. (02) 817-4711 to 13; (02) 813-1441 to 45 • Facsimile No.: (02) 815-2662)
Website: www.pea.gov.ph • Email info@pea.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

SECURITY SERVICES FOR PRA PROPERTIES (Goods 07-020)

1. The Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA), through its corporate budget intends to apply the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) in the sum of **Nine Million Six Hundred Thirty Nine Thousand Three Hundred Pesos (Php 9,639,300.00)**, inclusive of VAT, to payments under the contract for the **SECURITY SERVICES FOR PRA PROPERTIES.** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PRA now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the above-project. The properties are located in various areas of Metro Manila. The contract will be for one (1) year. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II and Annex A of Section III of the Bidding Documents.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act." Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Secretariat and inspect the Bidding Documents starting **December 21, 2007** from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased from **December 21 to January 4, 2008** by interested Bidders from the BAC Secretariat and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of **Nine Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Pesos (P9,650.00).** The method of payment will be cash or check payable to PRA. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PRA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **January 7, 2008** at 2:00 PM at the PRA Conference Room, 8th Floor Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the PRA (7th Floor) Office on or before **January 21, 2008** at 1:15 P.M. (PRA wall clock time). All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and amount indicated in the BDS. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on **January 21, 2008** at 1:30 P.M. at the PRA Conference Room, 8th Floor Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
9. Prospective Bidders should have undertaken a project or contract within the last (2) years of the same kind with a contract price of at least 50% of the ABC.
10. Pursuant to BIR Revenue Regulations 03-2005, all prospective bidders are mandated to file their income and business tax returns electronically using the Electronic Filing and Payment System (EFPS).
11. The PRA assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.
12. The PRA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **JAIME R. MILLAN**
BAC Chairman

(PDI – December 11 & 17, 2007)

PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION

Building I, Energy Center, Merritt Road,
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Nos. 893-6001 to 47 local 2104
Direct Line: 840-1614 / Fax No.: (632) 840-1619

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC), through its Corporate Budget of 2008 intends to apply the sum of Php2,841,941.36 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of the first year of engagement to payments under the contract for the **SECURITY SERVICES OF PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION (PNOC EC) MALANGAS COAL PROJECT** (the **"Project"**) located in Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay Province. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

PNOC EC now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the **SECURITY SERVICES OF PNOC EC MALANGAS COAL PROJECT.** The contract duration for the Project is two (2) years.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from PNOC EC's Procurement Section (c/o Mr. George N. Alejandro) starting December 17, 2007 upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of Pesos: Two Thousand (Php2,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **January 10, 2008, 9:00 A.M.** at the Garden Orchid Hotel, Zamboanga City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be submitted in three (3) sets each to PNOC EC's Bids and Awards Committee, Bldg. 1, Energy Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City not later than **2:00 P.M.** on **January 23, 2008.** The bids including the eligibility requirements shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter. **Late Bids shall not be accepted.**

PNOC EC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

This publication is also posted in our website at **www.pnoc-ec.com.ph** and in the DBM website at **www.procurementservice.net.**

Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–Dec. 17, 2007)

" SJA'S BALIKTANAW REUNION"

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CCP traffic advisory

IN VIEW OF THE CELEBRATION of Paskong Pinoy event opening at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Complex on Dec. 18, the public is advised that the entrance to the CCP Complex will be rerouted from 1pm to 10pm. Entrance to the CCP Complex via Roxas Boulevard will be through the Vicente Sotto Street (street fronting the electronic billboard). Exit from the CCP Complex to Roxas Boulevard will be through the Pedro Bukaneg Street.

Guests and patrons of the CCP are requested to plan their trips earlier to avoid being late in scheduled performances and events. The public is also invited for Paskong Pinoy activities: ceremonial lighting of the Bauan parols (Christmas lanterns); 2:00 pm- Sopas, Sining at Sorbetes (CCP's annual feeding and arts appreciation program), followed by the grand event of "Panunuluyan" starting at 4 p.m., plus choral and lantern-float competitions, Pinoy rock concerts, and other activities.

DOE seeks support for renewable energy bill

By Abigail L. Ho

AMID THE INTENSIFYING ADVERSE EFfects of climate change on the country, the Department of Energy is urging the public to support the renewable energy bill in Congress.

Fresh from the United Nations climate change conference in Bali, Indonesia, Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes said the increased use of renewable energy resources could be one of the best ways to mitigate the bad effects of global warming and climate change.

He recently met with members of the Renewable Energy Coalition during a visit to the Chevron Geothermal Holdings Philippines Inc. steam field facility in Laguna, where he urged the group to help push for the passage of the pending bill.

"The imperatives for the development and use of reliable energy resources are defined by the compelling situations we have at hand—from climate change, energy security to the local and national development situation," he said in a statement over the weekend.

"Renewable energy reduces harmful gas emissions from fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, thus promoting a 'green' environment," he added.

He said that with the right incentives, an encouraging policy environment and market rules, investors would be more easily compelled to develop renewable energy resources, resulting in substantial air quality benefits and energy self-sufficiency.

The renewable energy bill is expected to spur investments in the renewable energy sector because of the incentives that are included in it.

These incentives include exemptions from tariff duties and zero-rated value-added tax for the importation of machinery and equipment for the first 10 years of an operating contract, as well as tax credit on domestic capital equipment and services.

Special realty tax rates will also be granted for equipment and machinery to be used for renewable energy development. An income tax holiday will also be provided to potential investors for the first six years of commercial operations.

The bill has been pending in its various forms for almost two decades now.

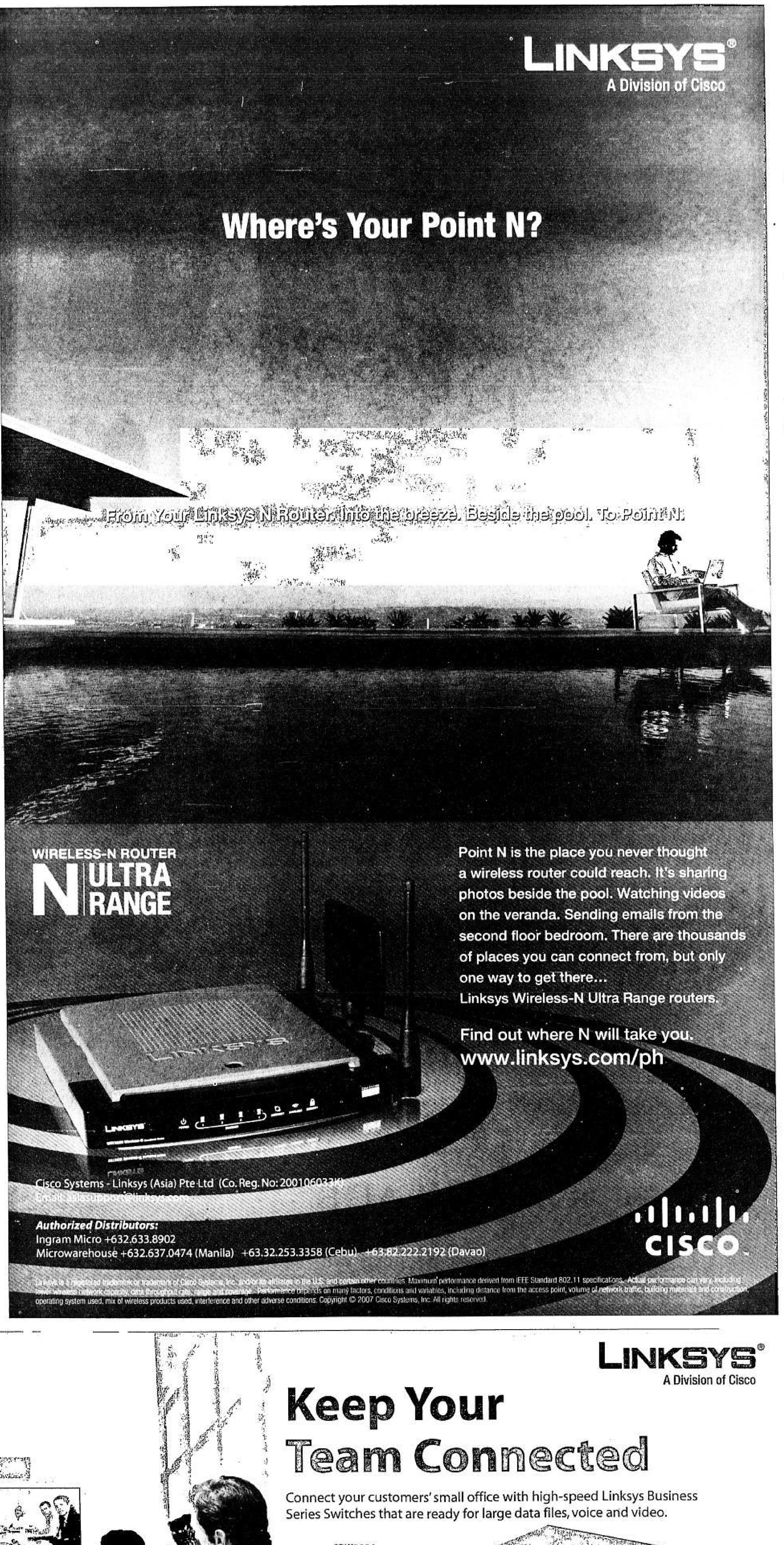
It almost became a law in the 13th Congress, having passed on the third reading at the House of Representatives. However, it reached only committee level approval at the Senate.

Splash prepares to enter Brazil

LISTED FILIPINO PERSONAL CARE COMPANY, Splash Corp., is preparing to enter the Brazilian market after signing recently a memorandum of understanding with Brazilian firm Fignelli Com. Imp. Exp. Ltda.

Based in Niteroi, a city across the bay from Rio de Janeiro, Fignelli was appointed distributor for Theraherb VCO and VCO Manila, kicking off Splash Corp.'s first foray in the burgeoning Brazilian health and wellness market.

Fignelli was founded in 2006, fusing the expertise of Mauro Lins, a medical practitioner, and businessman Claudio Martinelli. The two were elementary school classmates and both have the same passion for providing reliable, natural and organic products for the Brazilian consumer. Martinelli is now the president and COO of Fignelli while Lins continues full-time work as head of the Integrative Medicine of Clinica Fluminense, one of the most prestigious anti-aging and esthetics clinics in Brazil.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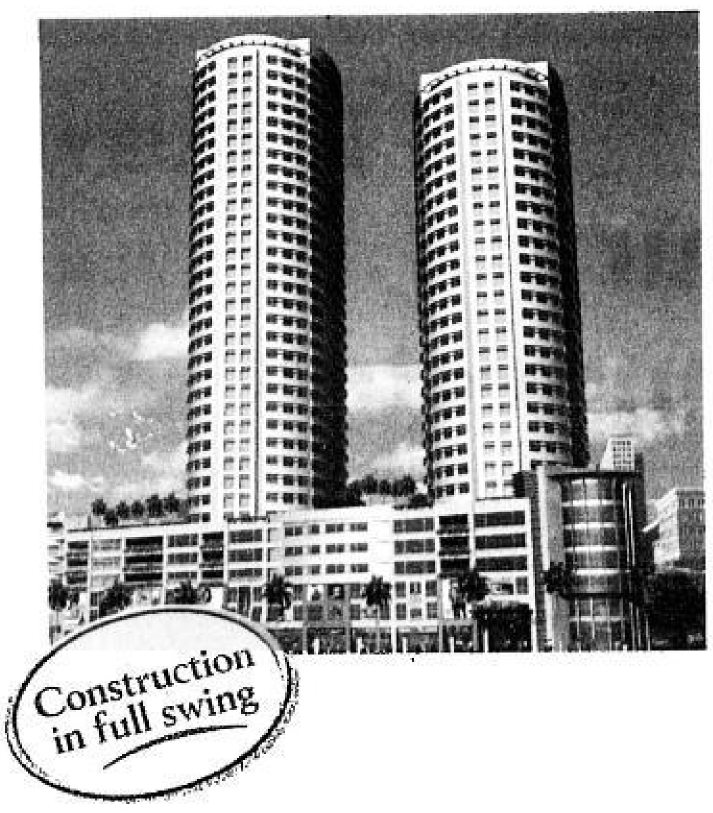
Give the Gift for All Seasons

CITYPLACE

PHASE 1

The New Face of Chinatown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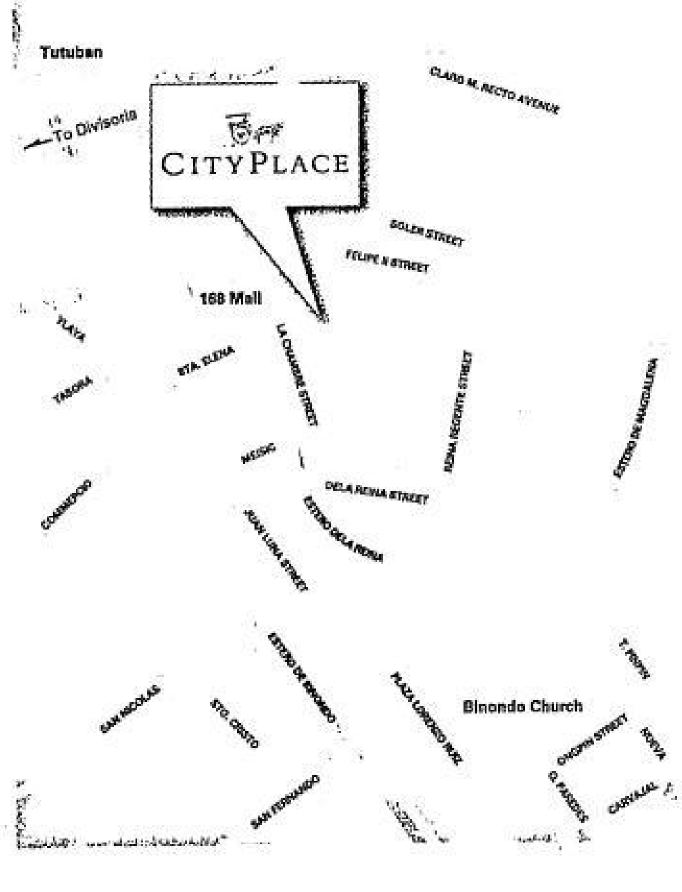
And the best of Chinatown are just a *calesa* ride away—from topnotch Chinese schools to the shops along Ongpin and the offices along Quintin Paredes. Also close by are Divisoria's bargain stores and Manila's University Belt and historical landmarks.

This season, give the gift that lasts—and lasts. Cityplace.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Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

BUSINESS Monday

CHIT JUAN

How did your business fare in 2007? What's up for 2008?

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

BUSINESS MONDAY'S EXECutive Forum asks executives—How did your company fare in 2007? How much did you grow? What projects, if any, did your company undertake? What are your expectations and plans for next year?

Good year

"GMA 7's year-to-date total revenues closed at P9.813 billion or 9 percent higher from comparative figure in 2006. Similarly, year-to-date October revenues of QTV and international operations (GMA PinoyTV) rose by 63 percent and 48 percent, respectively.

Return on equity was at par with last year's 30 percent. This ratio was achieved despite the abrupt increase in total stockholders' equity as a result of the public listing of the network last July 30.

GMA Network Inc. launched its first international television channel, the GMA PinoyTV last February 2005. GMA PinoyTV is a 24-hour general interest channel broadcast in the Filipino language, with Filipino migrants and overseas contract workers as its target audience.

The network is also set to launch its second international channel, the GMA Life TV which is intended for distribution in platforms where GMA PinoyTV is carried. Its programming will largely be from QTV, which the network also operates. GMA Life TV will be skewed toward the female audience, and the channel will carry a movie block.

FELIPE L. GOZON

GMA Network continues it expansion projects in the regions such as the Bicol Region, Visayas and Mindanao. The network is set to complete both its Batangas and Naga transmitter facility upgrades by mid-January 2008. Likewise, the studio complex in Dagupan is targeted to be operational by end of January 2008, while the studios in Davao and Naga are set to be completed by February and third quarter next year, respectively.

The company is also constructing two state-of-the-art studios within its compound in Quezon City. The bigger studio targets to accommodate 800 to 1,000 persons, and the other one will house 300 to 400 persons. Both are expected to be finished by June next year.

The sister channel of GMA 7, QTV, is evolving into a more specialized channel with much improved programs to address all facets of womanhood.

GMA Network expects a much stronger patronage of the Kapuso Channel from its viewers, here and abroad. It hopes to generate bigger income from the many projects it will launch next year and from its expansion in both the international and regional networks. It targets to close the gap or even surpass the ratings competition with its closest TV network rival.

Felipe L. Gozon
President, GMA Network Inc.

Specialty coffee growing

The specialty coffee segment continues to grow. We have expanded our store network and will continue for the next year and hopefully beyond.

Projects we have started: our environmental initiatives from eco-compliant store designs and through our supply chain.

Environmental concerns are top priority.

The whole coffee industry as an agricultural sector is vibrant due to increases in coffee prices making our farmers interested in growing coffee again.

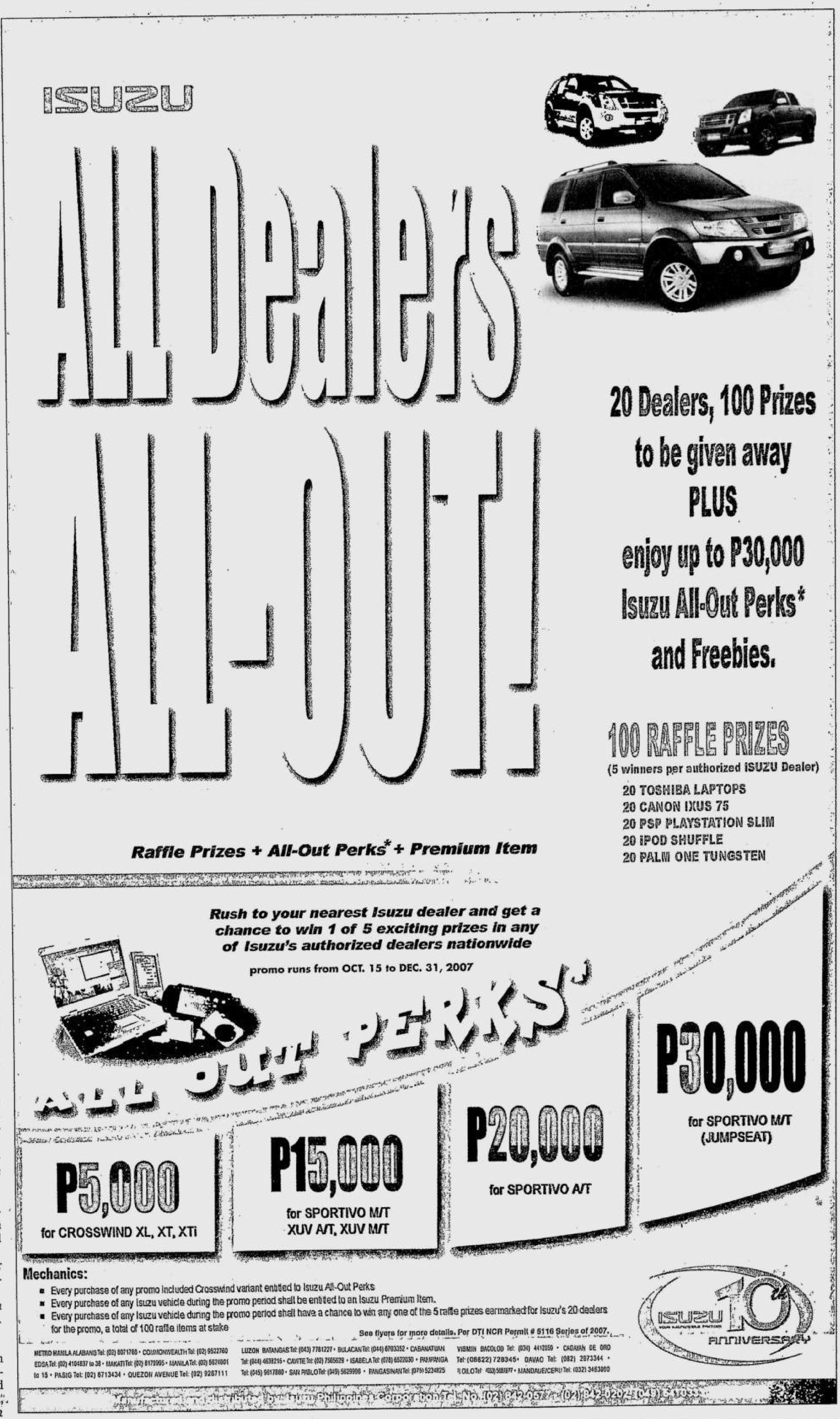
We expect next year to still be bullish for the food and beverage industry, particularly the specialty coffee segment.

Chit U. Juan
CEO, Figaro Coffee Co.

Interesting for preventive healthcare

We found 2007 a very interesting year in the preventive healthcare market from several perspectives. Primarily it confirmed that a brand, when properly positioned,

HOW/B2-2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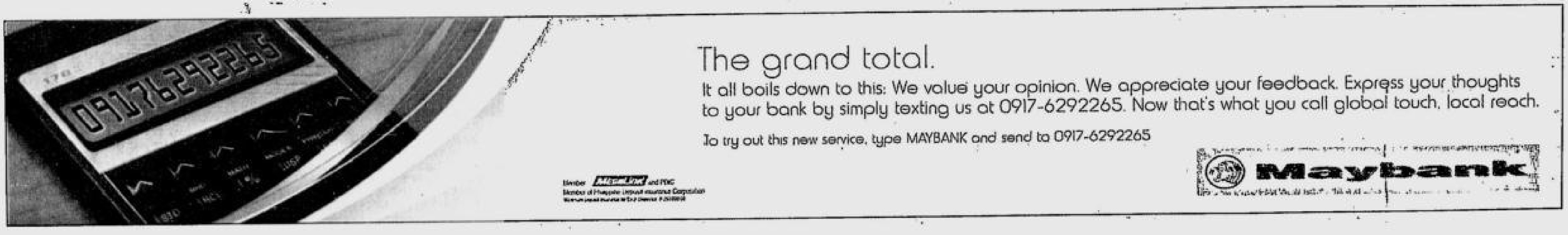
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Broad-based development: A perspective

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Senen C. Bacani

AMID ALL THE HYPE ABOUT OUR country's favorable economic indicators, the fact remains that its benefits have not trickled down to the poor, most especially the rural poor. In fact, a social weather survey conducted last Sept. 2-5, 2007 revealed that a new national hunger record was set, with 21.5 percent of households reported as suffering from hunger, without having anything to eat, at least once during the three months preceding the survey.

What is wrong with our development model? Isn't it ironic that with increased GDP growth, reduced fiscal deficit and other favorable economic parameters, we are faced with the growing reality of undernourishment and hunger among our rural poor—our citizens who ironically enough, produce the bulk of our food?

I can only offer a perspective, from one who spent a few years in government, from one who has spent all his working life in the rural areas not only working with the private sector but also with NGOs and peoples' organizations.

When I started to prepare this speech, I retrieved my past speeches when I was still with the government in the early '90s. While rereading my past speeches, I started to get a feeling of "déjà vu" because after almost two decades and 25 million more Filipinos, we are still talking about the same problems and, in many cases, have become worse.

From a net agricultural exporter, we are now a net importer. From being self-sufficient in rice and corn, we now import substantial quantities of these grains.

Our rural poor, instead of declining in number has now increased. Indeed, broad-based development would be a far fetched ideal unless we address the urgent needs of our rural poor.

We are worse off today than in the past decade or two because we have severely underinvested in agriculture, where most of our rural poor are engaged in. I don't have to convince you that output is very much related to input. You have to plant first before you can harvest. What we are spending today in real terms per capita is even less than in the past.

One does not have to be an economist to understand that our widening agricultural trade deficit signifies a continuing underperformance and a decline in our competitiveness. Whereas foreign farmers continue to be heavily supported by their governments, the Filipino farmer is hardly getting any. Worse yet, instead of providing for the promised safety nets when we lessened the tariff protection afforded our farmers, we continue the benign neglect of our farmers and fisherfolk.

When I say we, it means both the public and the private sectors. Let me first discuss then why public sector investment in agriculture and agri-related infrastructure and services is much less than what it should.

Considering the realities of our political system, the agriculture sector in the country, does not have a strong political voice. With the fragmentation of rural lands peopled with small farmers, our rural folk do not have much economic power. And as we are well aware, economic power begets political power and vice versa.

With a weak political voice, politicians and government can afford to continue paying lip service to the needs of our small farmers. In other countries, when farmers speak up, government and politicians listen and take heed of what they need.

Advocacy needs to be complemented with political skill and political support to induce the desired political will communication and advocacy are fundamental to consensus building and thus significant amounts of resources must be invested in the process.

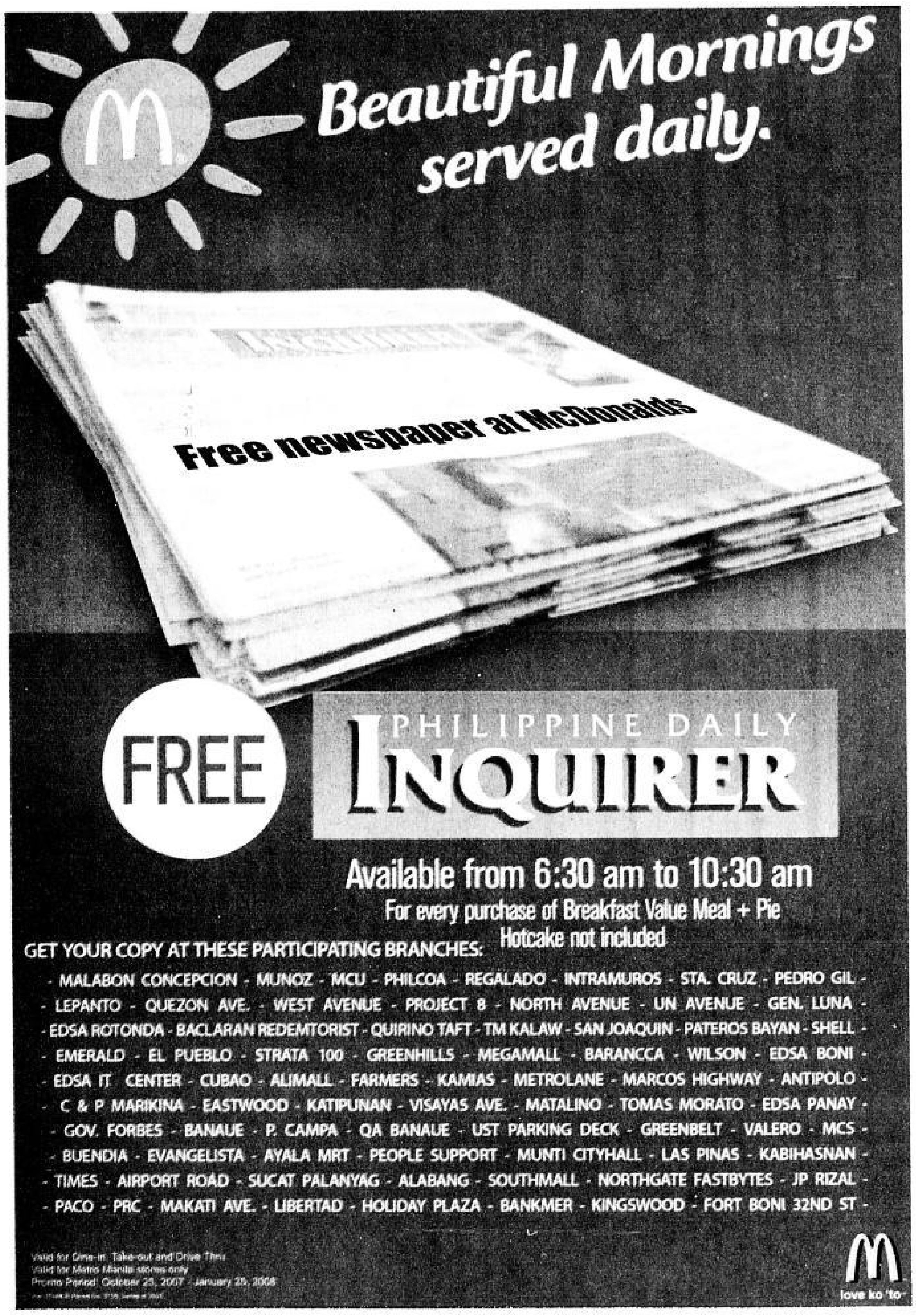
The challenge therefore is how the agriculture sector can speak up with a united and strong political voice. Unless it is able to do so, I am sorry to say that the same strategy as used in the past will just produce the same outcome.

However, one may ask, why hasn't the private sector taken up the slack in public sector spending? Shouldn't the development of the agriculture industry be private-sector led anyway?

Unfortunately, private investment in agriculture has come in trickles. Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap recently stated that more investments in agriculture are needed if the country wants to achieve the target of halving the number of "extremely poor" by 2015.

He noted that a recent world bank report had underscored this need and stressed that more funds in the farm sector could substantially reduce the number of "extremely poor" or those living on $1 a day.

MAPPING/ B2-3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love ko 'to

How did your business ...

From page B2-1

marketed, nurtured and given the right amount of advertising and promotional support, will provide the anticipated commercial returns. Ultimately it is the consumer who will validate and confirm that the product in fact performs according to their expectations and if the brand satisfies these conditions, then the brand will become the brand of first choice. Industry players are likely to recognize this success and act accordingly.

ALBERT MG GARCIA

Whealth Inc. continued its planned growth with the introduction of four new brands in different market segments, in new categories and with "first in the market" products all with interesting brand names. ABW Leaves of Life, an internal anti-aging anti-oxidant, Gargol oral wash made from natural essential oils and flavored, CranUTI Nature's Relief for the remedy of urinary tract infection and Nyte-E, an all natural face and neck lotion made from essential oils and natural vitamin E.

Whealth Inc will continue to develop products which we believe will likely have a latent consumer demand. In addition, we aim to identify existing segments which have traditionally remain unchallenged and will aim to raise the standard of product performance and delivery of products where existing brands have become complacent in their marketing.

Whealth Inc. looks forward to another interesting year in 2008 with the changing of consumer attitudes toward a more direct control of their wellbeing and that of their families with emphasis to preventive health and the affirmation that in fact health is wealth.

Albert MG Garcia
President & CEO, Whealth Inc.

Eventful, fruitful year

2007 was pretty much an eventful and fruitful year for us. We've developed and introduced into the market several products from our existing product lines. This year, we introduced Godiva Home BodyFresh, our first-ever product made specially for men. The new Godiva breast firming cream has been very well received by the market and has reaped very good reviews as well. We've also added to our roster of highly trusted products the Godiva LicoWhite gentle facial wash and the Godiva Vitamin C facial scrub—both turning out be breakthrough products.

Same goes for our services as well. This year Godiva Skin Station has expanded with the opening of four more outlets. To date, Godiva Skin Station has now a total of seven branches all over the metro. New skin treatment services have been introduced catering to specific skin care needs and individual lifestyles. ThermaFirme and ThermaShape treatment programs are both on top of our list.

Godiva is definitely moving forward in 2008. We're expanding the business with more breakthrough products coming in the pipeline. More Godiva Skin Station branches are opening up as well and we're definitely looking into putting up branches in key provincial areas.

Advanced technology

We advanced our education services with advanced technology. With our technology partner, we created an online enrollment and payment system. We created Ahead Interactive so we can teach students anywhere in the world. We have also sold a franchise of our tutorial and review center.

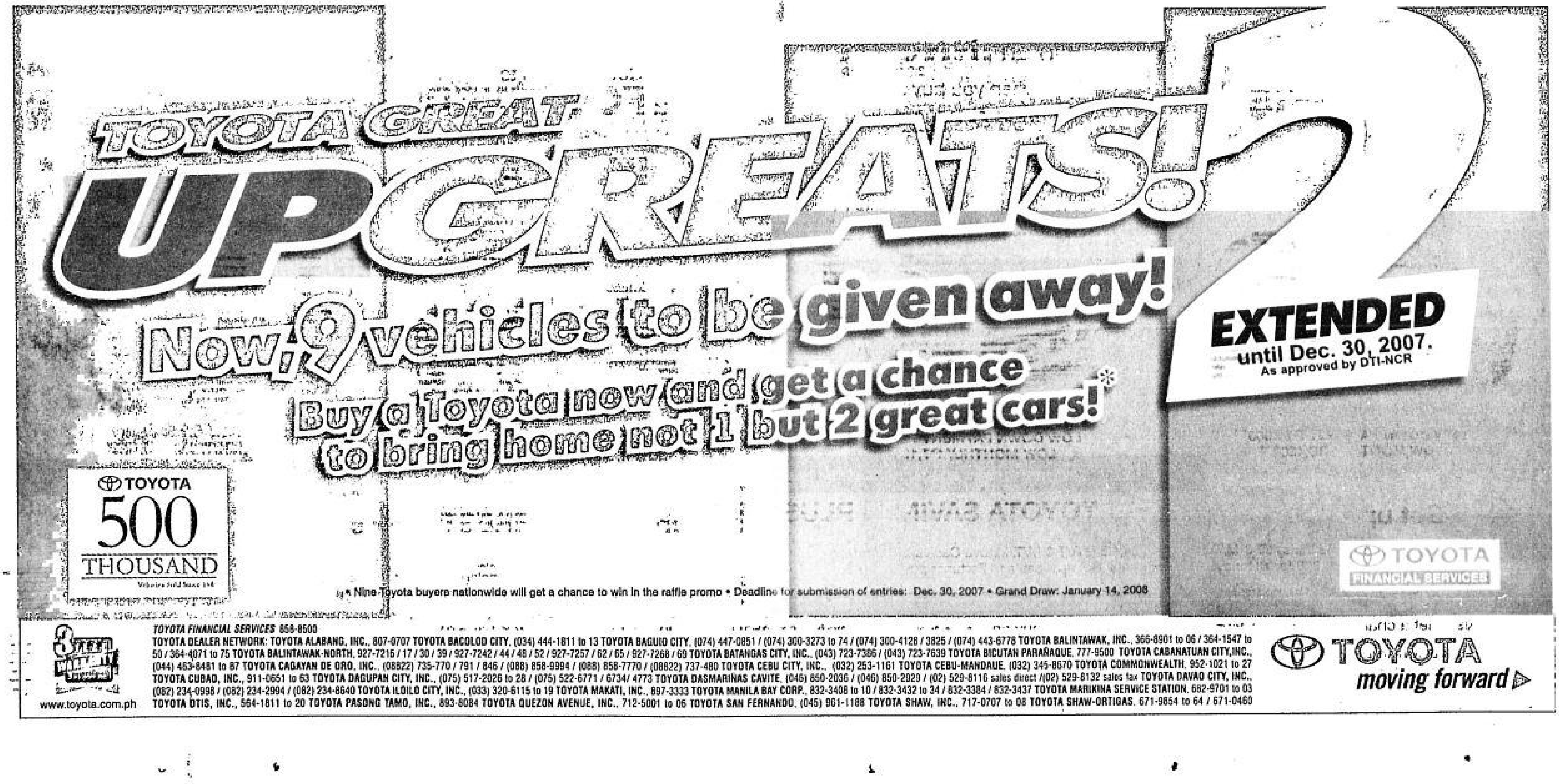
We have become more aggressive in serving the corporate market. Ahead Professional Network is also now in full gear. We are now training St. Luke's managers and professionals from other companies. We put our training needs analysis online and tapped IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) as our strategic partner in English training.

ROSANNA LLENADO

To improve our management system, we enrolled our company in the AIM Master in Entrepreneurship program. We renovated our office and created a corporate headquarters.

For next year, we expect more students from all over the Philippines to use Ahead Interactive. We are preparing to serve more corporate clients. We will grant more franchises. We will put up two more offices, hire more people, increase salaries and offer more benefits.

Rosanna Llenado
Founder, Ahead Tutorial and Review Center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Mapping the Future

From page B2-2

Government statistics show that the agriculture sector receives only a paltry share of total investments. BSP reported that as of March 2007, only 6 percent of all outstanding loans went to agricultural projects. According to the board of investments, less than 2 percent of total direct foreign investments in 2006 went to agriculture.

Considering that agriculture accounts for a fifth of the country's gross domestic product and employs nearly 2 out of every 5 Filipino workers, these loan and investment numbers were very little indeed.

Small farmers

The agriculture sector is dominated by small farmers due to the fragmentation of rural lands because of agrarian reform. With the government's failure to provide the necessary support services, we just continue to plod along with no significant improvements in productivity and quality of life as originally expected of the program. The challenge here is how to reconsolidate these rural lands for possible lease and/or contract-growing for a fully integrated and very productive rural enterprise which can compete not only with imports but in the global market as well.

Cooperatives have a pivotal role to play in this process of consolidation and integration as the small farmer, left by himself will definitely have almost no access to what he needs to make his land more productive and more profitable.

As indicated earlier, private investment in the agriculture sector has been very limited especially in Mindanao which has many of the poorest provinces in the country but at the same time has the greatest agricultural potential.

With a few exceptions, the people with resources hesitate to invest due to the prevailing peace and order problems in some areas that have plenty of good but idle or underutilized lands. They say that there should be peace first before development.

However, many people believe that development and peace go together without one preceding the other. Only real development can bring about an enduring peace which has continued to elude us for decades. As long as we have the Mindanao problem, the image of our country as an investment destination will continue to be tainted.

Peace in Mindanao

I firmly believe that peace in Mindanao can only be achieved with the help of the business sector. With more investments, more jobs will be generated and together with its multiplier effects will directly contribute to the alleviation of poverty which is one of the root causes of the peace and order problems in Mindanao.

One of the businesses I am associated with, La Frutera Inc. ventured into one of the previously conflict-ridden areas in Maguindanao. The company established a large-scale banana plantation using up-to-date technology and infrastructure.

Our experience for more than 10 years has shown that we can produce globally competitive bananas operating under a different cultural setting. Employing hundreds of Muslim rebel returnees, the company has demonstrated that a business can be successful by integrating the community's cultural system into the way we do business.

It is a business model on how to maximize resources while promoting the community's socioeconomic development and of how development can bring about peace. This experience can certainly be replicated elsewhere with a few companies already following suit.

As mentioned earlier, increases in government spending in rural infrastructure and related services must be substantially increased in order to make up for past neglect. In allocating investment resources, the public sector needs to focus on areas that present large externalities where the private sector would normally underinvest; where the government's investment would act as a catalyst to attract private investment; and where the government is needed to address equity and long-term or broader development issues that are not normally tackled by the private sector.

Increases in government spending has to be accompanied by increases in private sector investments due to the hesitancy of many investors to come in for individual projects because of perceived higher risks. I have suggested in a few speeches last month, the possibility of putting up a private-sector led agribusiness investment fund.

The fund, which should be large enough, say P50 billion, can invest in existing businesses which require capital for expansion and some greenfield projects. Investments in agriculture, agro-industry and tourism would be the likely candidates as we still have some comparative advantages in these areas.

Development of the rural areas cannot be based only on agricultural growth. Rapid growth of both agriculture and the nonfarm sector is required.

Agriculture fund

The investment mix should be such that the projected economic returns are good enough for investors. In a way, we are pooling resources and diversifying the risks and returns.

More details need to be fleshed out later if this investment option will generate enough interest.

Considering the billions we have spent in the past and the incalculable loss of lives and dislocation of people, perhaps it is about time to seriously consider this option.

If this fund can be leveraged with additional equity and debt financing, imagine how significant the impact can be on the lives of the people.

If after leveraging, total resources come up to P100 billion, this investment fund can directly generate a million jobs assuming P100,000 is sufficient for the creation of each job.

Even as we discuss this possibility, it is ironic to hear that both GSIS and SSS are looking at investing a billion dollars each in foreign financial markets due to the limited absorptive capacity of the domestic financial markets.

Getting even a small slice of these funds invested in financially viable rural enterprises would give a positive signal to many interested investors from the private sector.

In the context of a rural development strategy, we cannot overlook three important areas, namely, population, education and good governance.

With not enough investments, it is not surprising that growth of Philippine agriculture has not kept pace with our growing population. Food production must be accelerated if it is to keep pace with population growth. This becomes all the more urgent when we consider that a fertility gap exists between rich and poor, and urban and rural families thereby exacerbating inequity in society.

Higher rural fertility explains why, although poverty incidence in the countryside has dropped, the absolute number of rural poor has increased. The inability of agriculture production to outstrip population growth, coupled with inequities in distribution, confront us with the growing reality of undernourishment and hunger among our rural people.

That is why we must review our existing policies and programs regarding population planning. Our people, especially those in the rural areas, have to be aggressively informed of their various options regarding family size and make available to them what their needs are.

This is particularly important for the poor since they have limited financial means.

Population growth

A policy paper of the UP school of economics of December 2004 on "Population and poverty: The real score" concluded as follows: "Rapid population growth is a critical national concern. It impedes economic growth, worsens inequality and exacerbates poverty. A sound population policy must be part of good governance to promote faster economic growth, lower inequality and hasten poverty reduction. A national population policy, at the core of which are well-funded family planning programs that provide accurate information and access to all methods of contraception, is pro-poor, pro-women, pro-people and pro-life."

With regard to education, we are all well aware of what the problems are. The Filipino is our greatest resource as a nation. Yet we have severely underinvested in the past in providing him quality basic education and technical training.

There is universal agreement that building up the human capital of the poor is the most effective way for enhancing productivity and capacity to earn higher wages.

Since labor is the most important asset of the poor, ensuring that they, or their children, get high returns on this labor is therefore the surest way of giving them a path out of poverty.

In this highly integrated and globalized world economy, having adequate education is an imperative. Many of our unemployed in the rural areas suffer from this lack.

That is why, the country especially the public sector needs to invest more in education not only to keep whatever advantages we have left but more importantly to equip our people for gainful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Special focus

Since the majority of the Philippine poor are in rural areas, there must be special focus in assisting small farmers, landless farm workers, subsistence fisher folk and other rural dwellers and their children to have greater access to quality basic education and technical training.

As to good governance, survey after survey indicates corruption permeating all levels of government, especially agencies involved in revenue collection and public works. To provide the necessary funding for more basic services to the poor, increasing our tax collection efficiency is a must and needs to be pursued more vigorously and relentlessly.

Corruption takes away money from programs that could ease poverty and boost development. Incompetence and mismanagement leads to waste of public funds to the detriment of pro-poor programs.

In the end, what is needed is strong and honest political leadership to trigger any lasting stability and economic growth that will lead to more broad-based development.

Today, there are 30 million Filipinos who continue to feel neglected, growing resentful of being marginalized and mired in poverty. Surely, we cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the ordinary Filipino. We must continue to seek ways and means of how to help him get out of his distressed condition.

When people are determined to help themselves, when business is willing to reach out and share its distinct competence, and when government finally decides to extend a helping hand, no burden is too heavy and no goal is unreachable.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. Based on the speech delivered by the author during the 45th annual meeting of the Philippine Economic Society at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas on Nov. 14, 2007. The author is chair of the MAP Agribusiness and Countryside Development Committee and president of Ultrex Management and Investment Corporation. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph.)

MOVEMENTS

Eizmendi new retirement firm president

THE PHILIPPINE RETIREMENT INC. (PRI) HAS ELECTED FRANCISCO C. Eizmendi Jr., former CEO of San Miguel Corporation, as its new president during the annual membership meeting and general elections held recently at the Manila Polo Club.

Eizmendi succeeds Dr. Ernesto M. Ordoñez, who was elected PRI chair.

Elected vice presidents were: Jose de Guzman, housing; Dr. Benito Reverente, healthcare; Michael Deakin, lifestyle; and Joselito Yujuico, marketing. Appointed secretary general was Jose Capistrano Jr.

Eizmendi served as president and chief executive officer of San Miguel Corporation from 1987 to 2002. From 2003 to 2005, he was president-designate of the Institute of Corporate Directors.

Eizmendi is currently chair of Dearborn Motor Co. Inc., and independent director of Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., Great Pacific Life Insurance and Makati Finance.

Eizmendi has received prestigious awards, including the Tomasian Engineering Hall of Fame, The Outstanding Tomasian Alumnus Award and Outstanding Chemical Engineer Award.

The PRI is the private sector organization that unites support facilities in the housing, healthcare and lifestyle areas to promote the Philippines as the premier retirement haven in Asia.

Cuervo Appraisers promotion

CUERVO Appraisers, an asset valuation company, has announced the promotion of Arthur Pablico to the position of finance and HR manager.

Pablico who joined the company early this year, brings with him 30 years of solid experience in finance and operations management. He has valuable experience working with some of the leading local and international companies in the Philippines including ABS-CBN, L'Oreal, Pepsi-Cola, Triumph and W. Brown & Company. Pablico also had a stint at Belle Canada International in Riyadh for eight years. Pablico, a qualified CPA, did his BA/BS at the University of the East with a major in Accounting.

According to Cuervo Appraisers CEO, Josemari Cuervo, Pablico's appointment has strengthened the core management of the company. His wealth of experience as well as his impressive achievements in barely a year led us to promote him to a more significant position.

Cuervo Appraisers is the leading asset valuation company in the Philippines in terms of clients, revenue and market share. It is the first choice of banks, manufacturers, local and foreign investors, government and private institutions in their valuation requirements.

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TOYOTA moving forward
See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5640 Series of 2007

Whiz kids learn people skills, too

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA—HANDS WAVE in the air as students join a spirited discussion about start-up financing and laughter ripples through the class when someone identifies the three "Fs" of independent funding: Friends, family, fools.

But this is not a business school course for fired-up young entrepreneurs. It is an engineering class at the University of California, Berkeley, even though the students do not look much like the stereotypical "gearheads" with pocket protecters. That is by design, part of a national push to produce graduates who are both technically savvy and people smart.

"It is no longer good enough for engineers to come out of school with purely technical-level training. They need to know the business environment in which they are going to work," says Tina Seelig, executive director of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program, which among other things teaches entrepreneurial skills to Stanford's science and engineering students. "In this fast-paced world, engineers are not isolated in their cubes any more."

At engineering powerhouse MIT, the new approach was adopted in response to 1990s concerns about US productivity issues, said Barbara A. Masi, director of education innovation at MIT's engineering school.

The move to splice so-called "soft skills" into programs gained momentum when the accreditation body for engineering schools began requiring that schools teach things like teamwork and communication.

Much of the impetus for the change has come from the industry, including California's Silicon Valley.

Faculty at the University of Michigan gave overhauled courses and added projects that depend on team-building skills to give students a better sense of how to translate technical savvy into real-world know-how.

"You can have an engineered object that is designed to make the world a better place, but if it can't be built and sold it won't do any good," said James Holloway, associate dean for undergraduate education in Michigan's College of Engineering.

Recent Stanford electrical engineering grad Joshua Reeves has found a grounding in teamwork was a help in the business world. "Nothing is individual. Nothing is me standing or sitting in a room," says Reeves, product manager at Zazzle, an Internet consumer site.

New methods favor a do-it-yourself approach, such as a challenge at Stanford earlier this year in which teams of engineering and other students were told to turn a single pack of Post-It notes into something of value. One team got noticed by selling ads on its notes.

But while courses have changed, public perceptions have not.

"That's unfortunate, that the images of engineering are still very 1960s," Masi says. "Our students have a lot of fun."

MIT engineering students have visited New Orleans to study post-Hurricane Katrina. *AP*

Foundation pours in visions and smiles

"NEVER ENDING care and everlasting love." These words of Cheng Yen serve as the inspiration of the volunteers of the Tzu Foundation Philippines, as they once again set another series of medical mission at the Buddhist Tzu Chi Clinic Philippines in Bacood, Sta Mesa, Manila.

On Nov. 29, 28 patients received and tried on their new dentures provided by the kindhearted and generous donors of the foundation. The Tzu Chi volunteer doctors, Dr. Cheung, Dr. Uy, Dr. Lam and Dr. Oliva were also present to assist the patients and educate them on total oral hygiene and care of dentures. The doctors have also made further necessary adjustments for patients who have difficulty fitting their dentures.

Cheng Yen, a Buddhist nun from Taiwan, and the founder of the Tzu Chi Foundation, instructed the volunteers here in the Philippines to "Give the patients the best quality dentures, for this might be their only chance to have it."

The following day, another group of Tzu Chi volunteer doctors and ophthalmologists headed by Dr. Antonio Say treated and operated on 41 patients with cataract and pterygium.

The Tzu Chi Foundation Philippines was established in the country in 1994. Its founder, Cheng Yen, is a recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1991 for her efforts in "reawakening Taiwan's modern people to the ancient Buddhist teachings of compassion and charity."

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5984 Series of 2007

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How a bag can help the environment

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

RUSTAN'S SUPERCENTERS INC., operators of Shopwise and Rustan's supermarkets, says that its personnel would normally use up to 5.5 million plastic bags per month.

That all changed in July 2007 when the firm launched its Reusable Bag Program.

The reusable sacks are actually tote bags made of cloth that may hold twice the volume of a normal plastic bag you see at the checkout counter.

By using these tote bags with each trip to the supermarket, a customer gets to earn points.

Since July, the supermarket chain has sold up to 50,000 tote bags.

The result was a 49-percent decrease in monthly plastic bag consumption despite an eight-percent increase in sales.

The decline in the use of plastic bags may have been bad for plastic manufacturers, who lost about P2.4 to P3.2 million in sales a month. But this also means that there are 2.7 million less plastic bags in the environment.

RSI says it takes "approximately 200 years for a plastic bag to dissolve, and it would have taken 540 million years for these bags to disintegrate."

The Reusable Bag Program benefited the firm's business and the environment. RSI saved a few million by cutting down on its plastic bag purchase, while it earned a few million from the sale of its tote bags, which go for P100 each.

Shopwise marketing head Frances J. Yu says that, to encourage shoppers to use the tote bags, the contents of each bag are given double points in the Shopwise card. This translates to freebies for members who get to amass enough points.

"Everybody has to get involved," says RSI president Bienvenido 'Donnie' Tantoco, referring to environmental problems the world is facing today.

There has been increasing concern over the sad state of the world, with climate changes brought on by the greenhouse effect.

DONNIE and Crickette Tantoco of Shopwise with the reusable bags

HOW/B3-3

Wise tips to beat
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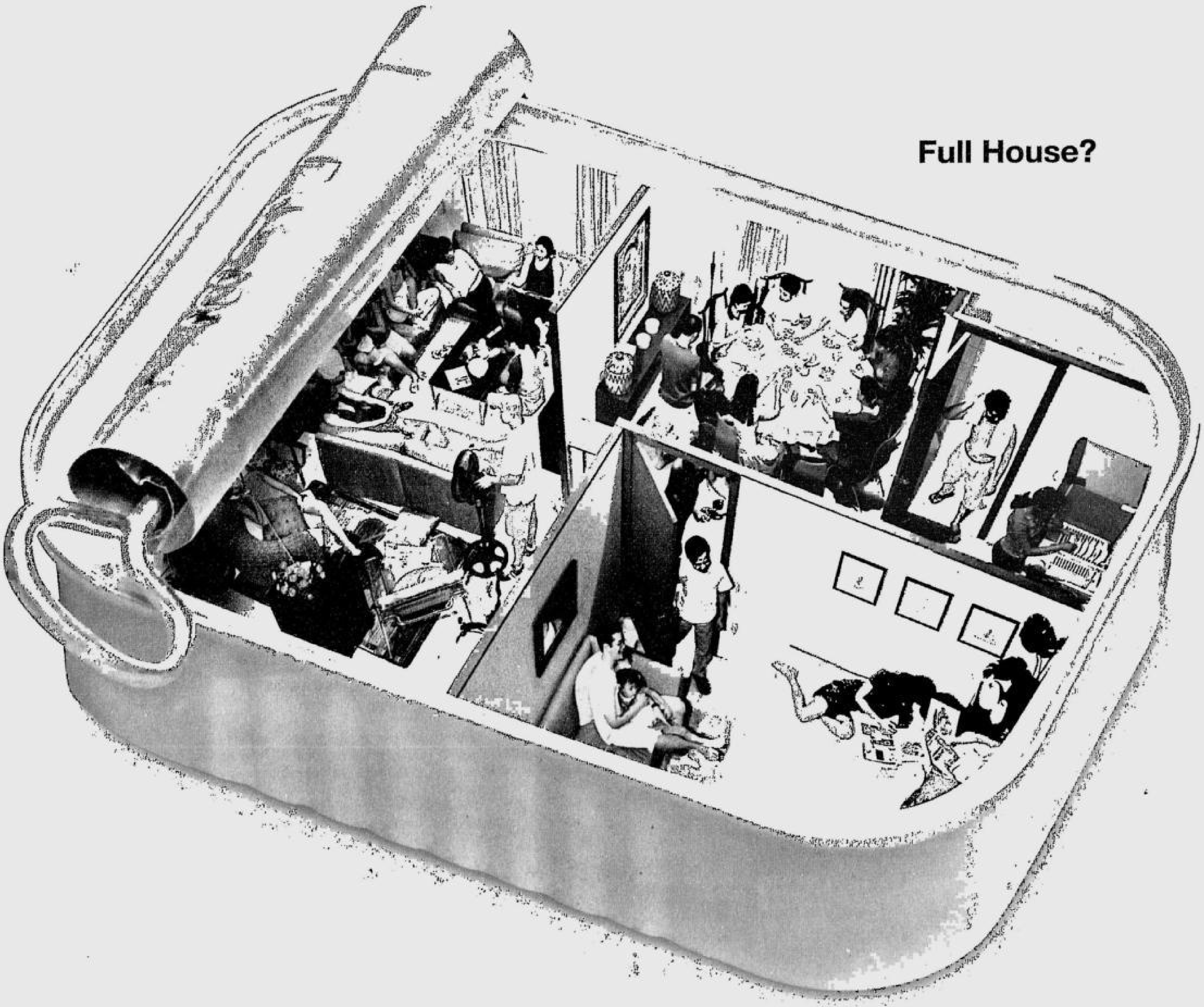


The mighty pen that could (almost) do it all

CAMERA is located near the pen's retractable tip.

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

IF ONLY I HAD THIS PEN BACK in my school days. I remember way back then that we had to write everything on a notebook or use a typewriter if the teacher wanted to receive a more presentable written report.

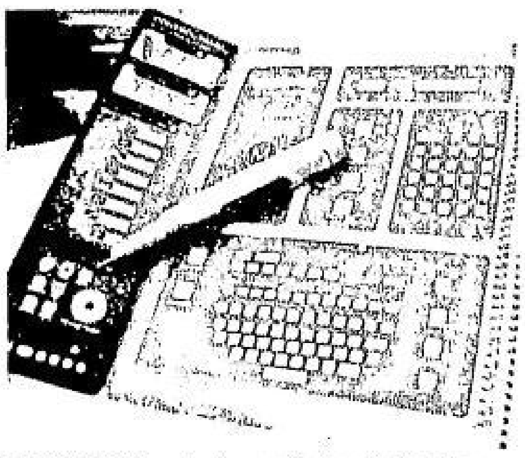
Schoolchildren these days are more fortunate considering that apart from computers and desktop printers, they could now have this high tech pen called Fly Fusion Pentop computer.

Manufactured by LeapFrog Enterprises, a leading developer of technology-based learning products based in California (distributed here by Ban Kee Trading), the Fly Fusion Pentop computer may look like any other conventional writing instrument except that this device could actually convert one's handwriting into digital documents that could then be e-mailed, printed, or saved.

Great news

Indeed, the Fly Fusion Pentop computer is great news for students and to some extent professionals who take notes on a regular basis.

With this device, they no longer have to encode their handwritten notes or carry a laptop or a tablet PC to school or work, if they have one.



THE PEN'S control panel is located at the back of the notebook's front cover.

The pen will allow them to store several pages of digitized text, which they could later upload to a PC computer (via a mini USB port located at the top of the pen).

The Fly Fusion Pentop computer and its accompanying software are currently compatible with Windows XP and Vista (won't work with Mac, unfortunately).

Works with a partner notebook

Apart from the software and the mini USB cable (for transferring files and charging the pen's battery), a Fly Fusion Pentop computer will only work with a partner writing medium called Fly Fusion Notebook (an extra would cost P799.75).

This ordinary looking 48-page notebook is actually covered with millions of tiny, imperceptible dots that are scanned by a camera near the pen's tip, letting the pen track and remember exactly what you're writing, drawing or even doodling.

By the way, this camera is quite sensitive so it is advised to keep your fingers clear of its lenses and always hold it near the paper's surface to prevent the pen from powering off unexpectedly.

Also, when you write on the Fly Fusion Notebook, just remember to write legibly, that is, there should be space between letters.

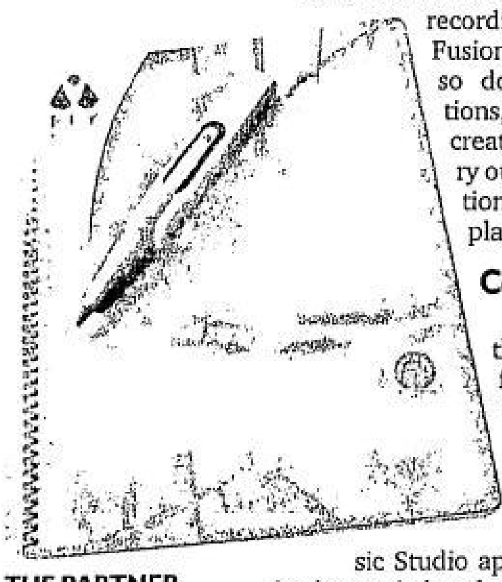
And once uploaded and converted into a Microsoft Word Document, the software's Flyctionary also has spell-check, dictionary and thesaurus features in case you need to revise.

64MB

And don't worry about running out of memory while in the middle of taking notes since the pen is equipped with a 64MB memory chip that should be enough for recording pages and pages of documents or dictations.

Otherwise, the user could buy a 64 MB Fly Fusion Memory Expansion Cartridge (sold separately), which should be more than enough to record tons of notes as well as accommodate several MP3 file downloads (yes, this pen could also store and play music via a built-in speaker).

And there's more to this pen than just recording text and MP3: the Fly Fusion Pentop computer can also do simple math calculations, offer homework help, create virtual flash cards, carry out basic language translation, and even record and play music.



THE PARTNER notebook

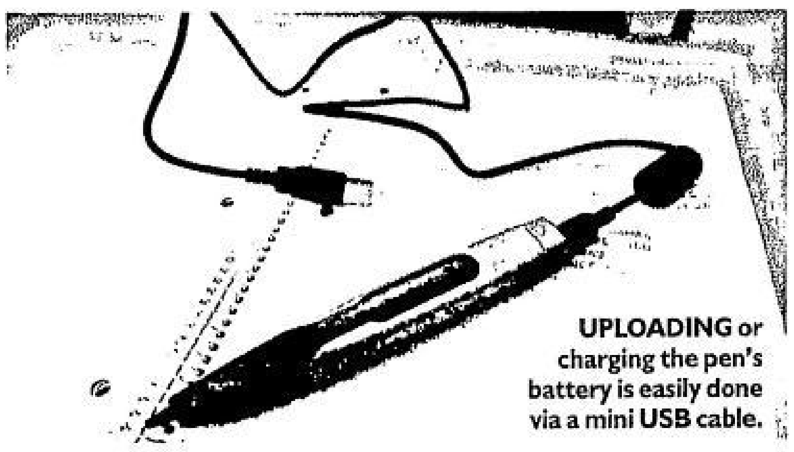
Control panel

In order to operate these other functions, the front and back cover of the Fly Fusion Notebook is equipped with a control panel (located at the back page of the front cover) and a Music Studio application (located at the back cover) that the user could tap using the pen's retracted tip.

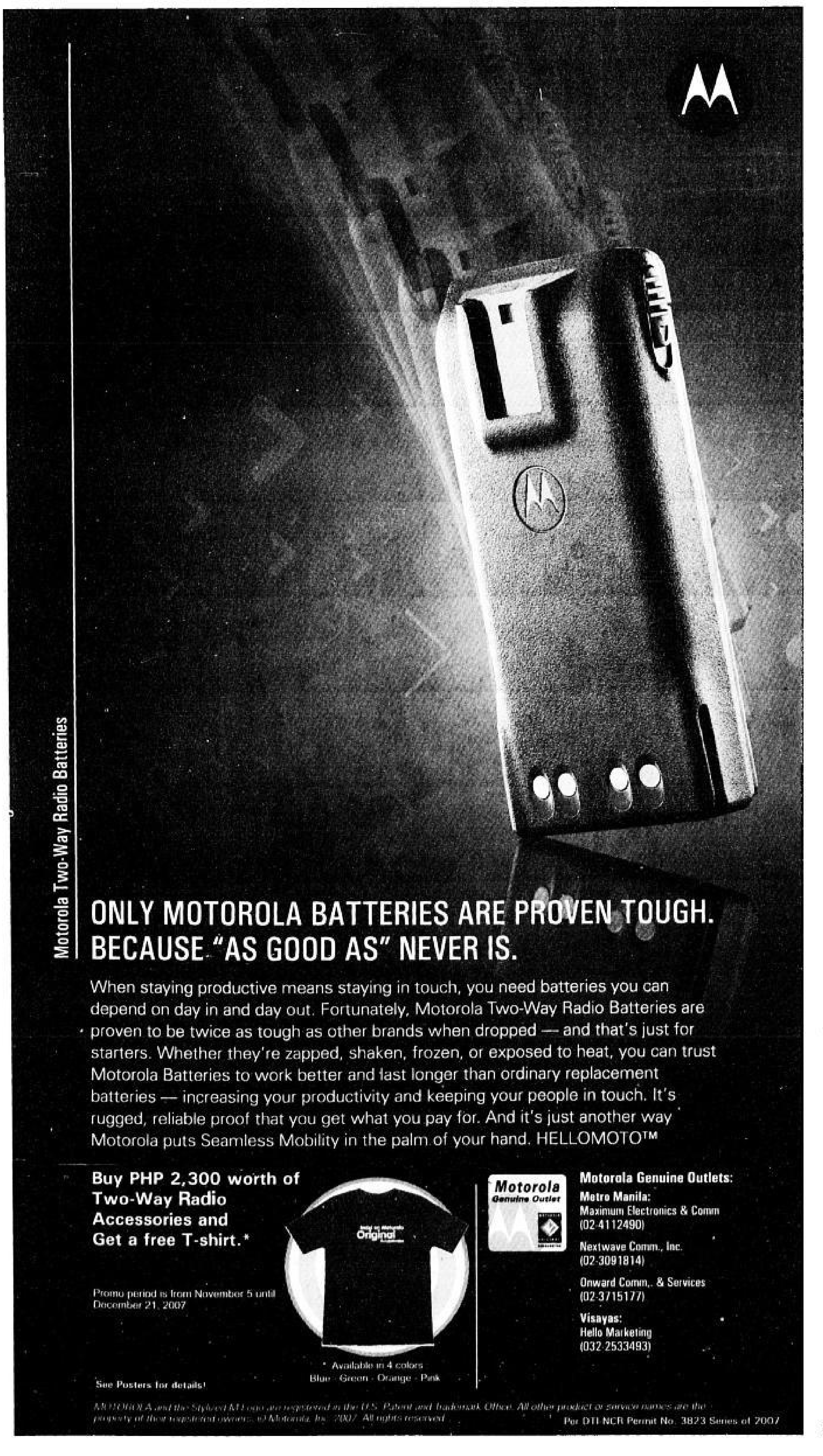
The control panel lets you set reminders, use a calculator, play MP3s, browse through other available applications, or just get help. The Music Studio, on the other hand, could play and record music.

The user could also choose from a variety of FLY Fusion software (sold separately) that offers step-by-step help in challenging subject areas such as math, algebra, writing, as well as Spanish and French translation in addition to a host of fun applications like games and music creation.

For P7,999.75, it is a must-have for today's generation of schoolchildren who rely on the latest technologies for learning support and homework guidance.



UPLOADING or charging the pen's battery is easily done via a mini USB cable.



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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3823 Series of 2007

Samsung offers slimmest camera phone

By Raquel P. Gomez

THE RACE FOR THE ULTIMATE CAMERA phone never seems to cease as major mobile phone brands keep coming out with higher megapixel cameras to upstage one another almost on a monthly basis.

Major mobile phone provider Samsung keeps up with the rapid race by coming out with the slimmest 5-megapixel full-featured handset and, as part of a promotional pitch, allowing professional Filipino photographers to have their way with the device.

Five up and coming professional photographers have taken Samsung's SGH-G600 in lieu of their DSLR cameras to take photos with demanding themes. Ronnie Salvacion comes out with "Flash Night" for nighttime photography; Paolo Pineda has "The Red Dot," or photos with classic movies inspiration; Jake Versoza has "Street Portraits," or slices of life in Binondo; Noelle Hernandez takes on "Secret City," or photos of fleeting moments in Beijing, China; and Steve Tirona has "Urban Runway," snapshots of street culture, lifestyle and philosophy.

With the new SGH G600, a slider camera phone only 14.9 mm thin, Samsung is promoting the idea that regular mobile phone users can actually experience a measure of professional photography using the 5-megapixel camera phone.

Samsung is also floating the idea that even professional photographers, whose standards for photos are way above others, will still love to dabble with the SGH-G600.

"The viewfinder mode is very useful, especially for beginners, since it gives the basic principles of photographic composition," says Salvacion.

"It's my first time to do a series of photos using just a camera phone, and I was impressed with the camera's high resolution," says Pineda.

"This camera phone is discreet. You can capture moments as they happen without people actually noticing," says Versoza.

"It's easy to use and navigate through its features. I also admire the settings which I could play around with, and the pictures do come out clearer," says Hernandez.

"For a camera phone, the images are surprisingly clear," says Tirona.

But why would the SGH G600 claim such a high standard for a camera phone?

Let's look at its insides and find out.

As a full featured 2.5G handset, the SGH G600 has standard features found in other phones in the same market niche, such as MP3 player that plays multiple music formats, Music Library, NetFront Browser V.3.4, which provides PC-like browser capabilities, Bluetooth V.2, a microSD slot that can accommodate up to 2Gig microSD card, and 2.2" QVGA TFT display capable of displaying 16M colors.

Now as a fully equipped 5 megapixel camera, the phone features the High Sensitive Shot, which equips the phone with a light-sensitive ISO 800 image sensor that stabilizes the image, thereby compensating for shaky hands or lack of a tripod. It also minimizes the blur in a low-light situation, eliminating visual noise, which results in a clearer, more precise image on par with stand-alone digital cameras.

As to the capability of lighting subjects, the SGH G600 has the Power LED that emits a flash powerful enough to light objects at distances of up to two meters away. With this feature, the camera phone provides greater visibility of subjects, which means you can capture shots even in indoor environments, dusk, and night exteriors.

Intuitive Camera feature allows for faster operation of shots, while Various Shot Mode provides selection from a variety of creative imaging options. Panorama Shot stitches together photos from end to end to help you create long horizontal image or panoramic view.

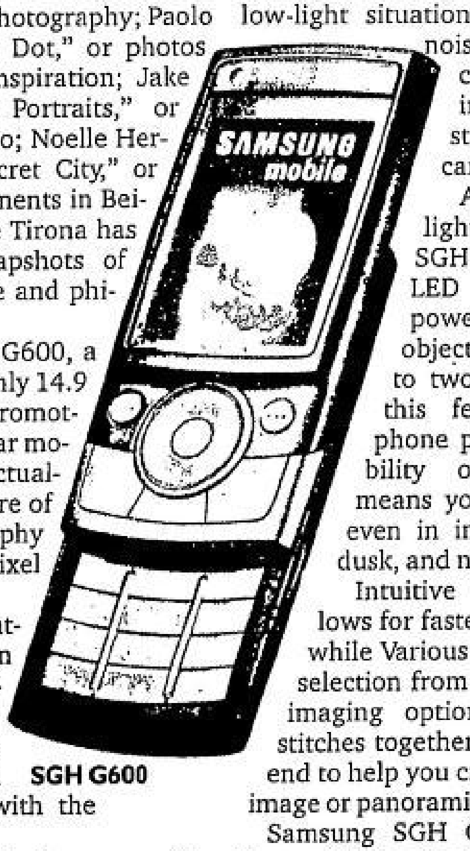
Samsung SGH G600 is capable of Macro Shots, allowing for clear magnified focus on the smallest detail, while Mosaic Shot stitches together multiple rows of various photos in collage frame for interesting perspective.

It also has an Image Editor that incorporates multiple effects such as text color, cartoon or negative image, without affecting image size or quality.

It also features White Balance that corrects the color balance of photos to create more natural looking images.

And like the rest of the digital cameras out there, the device has a PictBridge and Bluetooth standard for printing purposes.

SGH G600, covered in aluminum metal mount, and coming in black, chrome silver and silver black colors, has indeed sealed the expectation and even upped the ante for the 5-megapixel camera phone market.



SGH G600

Exec works and plays with gizmo

CALL CENTERS HAVE BEEN rightfully called the country's sunrise industry with reported revenues of $3.5 billion this year. The busy executives behind them are shining the light on our workforce of world-class professionals. No one knows that better than Marife Zamora, who has led one particular operation leap from 0 to over 11,000 employees in just four years.

Zamora is vice president and country manager of Convergys, the global leader in customer care, human resources and billing services with clients in more than 70 countries. She oversees operations of nine sites across Metro Manila, Cebu, and soon, Bacolod City.

Contrary to perception, this top call center exec rises by midmorning for a prayer of thanksgiving, closely followed by a peek into her Sony Ericsson P1i. This fifth-generation smartphone from Sony Ericsson's P-series is Zamora's own handy and mobile contact center, keeping her in touch with global operations and local happenings via e-mails and text messages even while she sleeps.

"Always being connected while on the move is a normal part of my working life," says Zamora.

The Sony Ericsson P1i represents some of the best features of its predecessors: Push e-mail, WiFi connectivity, document editors, speedy Net browsing, VoIP support, multimedia entertainment, remote access to e-mails and personal information management data, business card scanning and others; all streamlined in a new, slimmer design. Yet Sony Ericsson has packed in a 3.2-megapixel camera; a credible media player; FM radio, RSS feeds, 3D games, and even mobile TV capability into the new P1i.

The P1i remains by her side even during breakfast. "My P1i has to be next to me even while I'm eating since I list my food intake on my phone's document file manager," she says. "I watch what I eat. I've gone through diet phases like everyone else."

MARIFE Zamora with her constant assistant, her e-mail-enabled Sony Ericsson P1i

Her business appointments typically begin after lunch. On the go, her P1i becomes an indispensable companion. "I use waiting and traveling time to make phone calls and notes. I get some of my best ideas on the road and do a lot of web browsing over my phone," she says.

As a constant assistant, her e-mail-enabled P1i lets her handle corporate and personal e-mails, contacts, and calendar wherever she is. "I can e-mail at a much faster rate than I would expect from a regular phone," she says. "Thank God for mobile e-mail! I used to sneak off from precious family moments just to launch Outlook," she adds.

Zamora's appointments vary from delivering speeches on the industry's economic benefits, to meeting local government officials for the rollout of more English proficiency programs. Reading and checking documents are done on the fly, or over her P1i, which offers document viewing and editing for Word, Excel and Powerpoint.

"I love the P1i for doing away with the need to collect business cards. I just take a scan of the card and the contact details are transferred directly into my phone book," says Zamora. "Its camera also takes great shots at 3.2 megapixels. It's a useful tool for work."

Zamora relies on her network for real-time, personal communication. But urgent e-mails are reason enough to call immediately.

"I believe you should respond to e-mails with a phone call when someone is upset, to avoid misunderstandings. Thirty seconds after they hit the send button, you already called to deal with it. It will also help you to communicate your intentions via your audible tone of voice. It makes a lot of difference," she adds.

"Think of this as my contribution to boosting digital intelligence. Academic researchers and technical writers all agree that the shortest distance between two minds is a live conversation. Nothing beats it," she says.

Once in the Makati corporate headquarters, Zamora sits down to teleconferences with colleagues and clients in the United States. These can extend until the early hours of the morning. But the proud mother of two young IT professionals keeps in touch with them through calls home.

"Most of what I do are good management practices at any company. The difference here is the speed at which things are done, and the speed at which the company is growing," she notes.

Zamora unwinds to Humphrey Bogart uttering his immortal, "Here's looking at you, kid," in Casablanca on her home theater. To end her day, she dozes off to music by Brahms.

Aside from this classic composer on her P1i's music play list, Zamora has listened to everything Sting has done. "And I love Led Zeppelin and Cream, too," the executive admits.

For further downtime, she enjoys five things on the Internet. "I find. I buy. I pay. I share and look for entertainment and content. I want to find stuff. I am crazy about Hermes bags. eBay, amazon.com and shopnzip.com are some of my favorite sites." Seek in the web, and you shall find in the web indeed.

Music and speed walking are among her stress busters, but work for her is never really work. "When I took over here, I set about my work with my usual mixture of know-how and curiosity. But I also listened to my superiors and colleagues in headquarters who have been in this business for a long time and conferred closely with them. Since then, 11,000 of the country's best and brightest have ushered Convergys from start-up to a powerhouse."

How a bag can help ...

From page B3-1

"If we don't do something now, it is going to be a disaster," Tantoco states. "And we can't say that other people should take care of the problem."

He says in deciding as a company to do something about the environment, they realize the customers have to be involved too.

"When you serve customers, you add the element of what to do that helps the situation where we use plastics," Tantoco says.

Apart from reusable bags, the firm is also helping the World Wildlife Fund by donating a portion of its sales proceeds from certain products to the Fund.

Shopwise's marketing head Frances Yu adds that they will also help in educating the customers on certain issues via programs that will be aired on plasma TV sets in the stores.

Yu points out that consumers these days are already aware of the environment and are very health conscious.

This is why Shopwise is beefing up on its "environmentally safe products"—goods that do not contain materials potentially harmful to the environment.

"Customers nowadays read the labels," she says.

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From dressing up lawns to dressing up people

FRANKO Barrio grew up with a dressmaker mom.

ABIGAIL HO

By Abigail L. Ho

AS EARLY AS CHILDHOOD, FRANKO BARRIO has been exposed to fashion, having grown up with a dressmaker mom. He has lived almost all his life amid sewing machines, mannequins, bolts of cloth, buttons, and needles and threads.

So when he finally felt the urge to plunge into the world of business, going back to his roots was the most logical thing to do.

Armed with a degree in landscape architecture from the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Franko is no stranger to the arts. But dressing up a lawn and positioning plants in a garden is hardly anything like dressing people up.

The best trait he got from his landscaping days, he relates, is his meticulousness and attention to details.

"When I landscape, I want to personally position the plants and not just leave it for someone else to do. Plants have 'faces,' too—which means they also have good and bad angles. I always make sure that what people see are the plants' best angles," he says.

The same goes for designing dresses and accessories, he says. Details are very important as these spell the difference between mediocre and great outputs.

Down to the nitty-gritty

For his Bo. Couture line, launched via bocouture.multiply.com just last September, Franko explicitly exhibits his focus on the littlest details and his penchant for framing the face of the wearer of his creations.

His designs are mostly classics with little twists—crisp white blouses with pin-tuck details and wide collars, Maria Clara- and Tandang Sora-inspired tops made for the modern woman, simple shift dresses that can go from day to night, "chef jackets" with structured collars, and cute candy clutches that are both classic and of-the-moment.

"I want my clothes to look really expensive, even if they're actually reasonably priced. That's the look that I want to achieve," he says.

He says the difference lies in the little details that he adds to his designs—his favorite being the steel boning that makes his collars seem to stand in attention all the time, framing the wearer's face.

"I believe that clothes should be able to bring out the wearer's best features. My collars are done in such a way that they frame the wearer's face and make her look more regal and sophisticated. They are designed to make the wearer want to keep her back straight and her chin up all the time," he explains.

They come in the night

Franko relates that his designs mostly come to him in the dead of night, while most of the world is asleep. He keeps a sketchpad conveniently on hand, by his bed, to make sure that no design escapes him.

Some designs are also completed over almost never-ending cups of coffee and countless sticks of cigarette.

He says it's probably because of the call center lifestyle that he has gotten used to in the past two years—one which he has decided to pursue after failing to strike it big in landscaping, but has left just a few months back to follow what his heart dictates.

"It was really scary when I started the business. I knew I couldn't go into business without being hands on all the time, so I quit my job. I took up a short fashion design course in May, and that probably sealed my fate," he relates.

The road to the business world was not that easy for Franko since he had to go through a lot of obstacles before actually putting up his own business. There were also some things that he had to give up.

"When I was in landscaping, I began in my uncle's firm in Batangas before deciding to go freelance after a year. That was difficult because you don't really get good accounts when you're not part of a big company. So I left the trade and joined the call center bandwagon," he recalls.

"That was a weird lifestyle to get used to since I'm up and about while everybody's asleep, and I usually go out with my friends while everybody's in the office, working. But I eventually got used to it. Between shifts and during whatever free time I had, I drew," he adds.

The final decision

His first design was for a good friend's graduation—an off-shoulder *barong* that gave the classic Filipino garb a modern twist. This got rave reviews.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

"I was in the call center industry up to August, but I've been preparing for my business since July. It was difficult finding the right materials and the right subcontractors for my clothes since most sewers complained that my designs were difficult to execute," he relates.

"When I finally found good sewers, I started selling my stuff, posting them on my Multiply site and also selling them in bazaars. My first bazaar was terrifying since I wasn't sure how people would react to my creations. But I sold a lot of pieces then, and my designs, although executed on neutral-colored cloth, were able to stand out in a sea of color," he says.

His next bazaars, many of them held just this month and last month, were almost all sold-out.

"The response was overwhelming," he says.

By next year, he reveals that he plans to go back to his roots—not in landscape design, but to Sta. Rosa, Laguna where he is from.

"My mom's a dressmaker and I think she's a huge influence in my going into fashion as well. I plan to shift my business to Sta. Rosa by finding good subcontractors there," he says.

Hard work

Until then, he says he will just continue to churn out more new designs to serve the needs of his clientele—most of them from their late 20s and above.

He also hopes to eventually open his own physical shop and come out with more made-to-measure designs. While still working toward that goal, he says he will continue to join bazaars, accept orders via his Multiply site, and start consigning some of his wares. "I'm just starting and it's still pretty much hard work all the way. Apart from the design process, I also look for the suitable materials myself, I set up my bazaar space mostly by myself, do the accounting myself, and maintain my website myself," he says.

"It's really hard work, but that's how it is with start-ups. You just have to have that courage to follow your passion. To sustain your business, you have to have passion," he adds.

While still far from being a success, he advises twenty-somethings like himself who want to go into business to just plunge into it.

Batang UP is up there in competitive garment business

By Myrna Rodriguez Co
UP Institute for Small-Scale Industries

BATANG UP, HE CALLS HIMSELF. HE grew up inside the University of the Philippines campus, worked in UP, met his wife, Flor in UP, got married in UP, and is now managing his own flourishing garment business based in UP.

Mike Esteves was a grade schooler when he began dabbling in T-shirt printing as an assistant in his Kuya Reynaldo's silk-screen printing business. He learned the trade fast because he was an artist at heart who saw T-shirts as a drawing paper or canvas of sorts.

At 15, he begun experimenting with his own designs. He was also his kuya's all around part-time errand and delivery boy, gamely boarding *ikot* jeepneys around the UP campus with bundles of T-shirts on his shoulders.

Even when he went to work at the UP Transportation Training Center as a draftsman, Mike still had half his mind on T-shirt design and printing.

MIKE Esteves shows off his products

In 1989, Mike resigned his job to pursue his passion. He began his own home-based T-shirt printing business, starting with meager capital and only the most basic equipment—squeegees of various sizes and an exposure table.

In the way of most couples in business, it was decided Flor would keep on working at the UP Business Research Center while Mike tried his luck in the yet uncertain venture. If the business failed, they had Flor's stable employment to fall back on.

Today, 18 years after they made the crucial decision, Mike's Maroon Garments is now a full-fledged garment producer that has integrated its operations to include sewing, design, printing, wholesaling and retailing.

In 1993, they finally acquired an outlet at the UP Shopping Center known as Maroons Boutique and Novelty Shop. By then, too, the business has become stable enough to enable Flor to resign her job and handle the company's accounting and finance requirements.

Their property in Quezon City now combines three distinct units: a garment factory, a printing shop, and the family residence.

The business employs 10-12 workers at a time, has seven sewing machines, and a cutting machine. At the printing department, designing has been computerized although the printing itself still employs the traditional manual process using squeegee sets and exposure tables.

Capacity has gone up to 500 to 1,000 T-shirts a day in the printing unit, depending on the complexity of the design. At the sewing department, up to 300 pieces of assorted garments can be produced daily.

The market has also grown to include universities and schools around the Diliman area as well as various student organizations and private businesses needing promotional giveaways.

Last year, SM began placing orders of T-shirts with Pinoy designs for Kultura, the department store chain's Filipiniana boutique.

This year, Maroon Garments became the first licensed producer and seller of UP T-shirts, jackets, shorts, pants and other paraphernalia including mugs, caps, stickers, bags, umbrellas and gift bags. The company projected a minimum output of P2.6 million worth of goods a year.

There are advantages to a UP license, says Mike. All colleges and units of the university are now Maroon Garments' official market. The Institute for Small-Scale Industries has offered free counseling to improve its work processes. The administration helps promote and market its products. With the upcoming centennial celebration next year, Mike expects a peak year for sales.

There are disadvantages, too—as unauthorized manufacturing and selling of UP paraphernalia have gone on. Because most of them are informal and do not pay license fees and taxes, competitors can afford to offer lower prices.

Flor laments that they have been treated unfairly by the BIR in its recent city mapping operations. "At first, we were complimented for being good taxpayers, which we are. Later, they questioned a technicality—that we failed to note down customers' addresses in the official receipts." Their business is being penalized for this oversight.

Despite setbacks, Maroon Garments remains unfazed. It has a competitive edge after all. With its integrated operations, Mike and Flor can control quality, price, and delivery schedules.

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3) What is your number 1 wish that Inquirer can grant you, and why?

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INQUIRER

From dressing up lawns to dressing up people

By Abigail L. Ho

FRANKO Barrio grew up with a dressmaker mom.

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And the rest, as they say, is history.

"I was in the call center industry up to August, but I've been preparing for my business since July. It was difficult finding the right materials and the right subcontractors for my clothes since most sewers complained that my designs were difficult to execute," he relates.

"When I finally found good sewers, I started selling my stuff, posting them on my Multiply site and also selling them in bazaars. My first bazaar was terrifying since I wasn't sure how people would react to my creations. But I sold a lot of pieces then, and my designs, although executed on neutral-colored cloth, were able to stand out in a sea of color," he says.

His next bazaars, many of them held just this month and last month, were almost all sold-out.

"The response was overwhelming," he says.

By next year, he reveals that he plans to go back to his roots—not in landscape design, but to Sta. Rosa, Laguna where he is from.

"My mom's a dressmaker and I think she's a huge influence in my going into fashion as well. I plan to shift my business to Sta. Rosa by finding good subcontractors there," he says.

Hard work

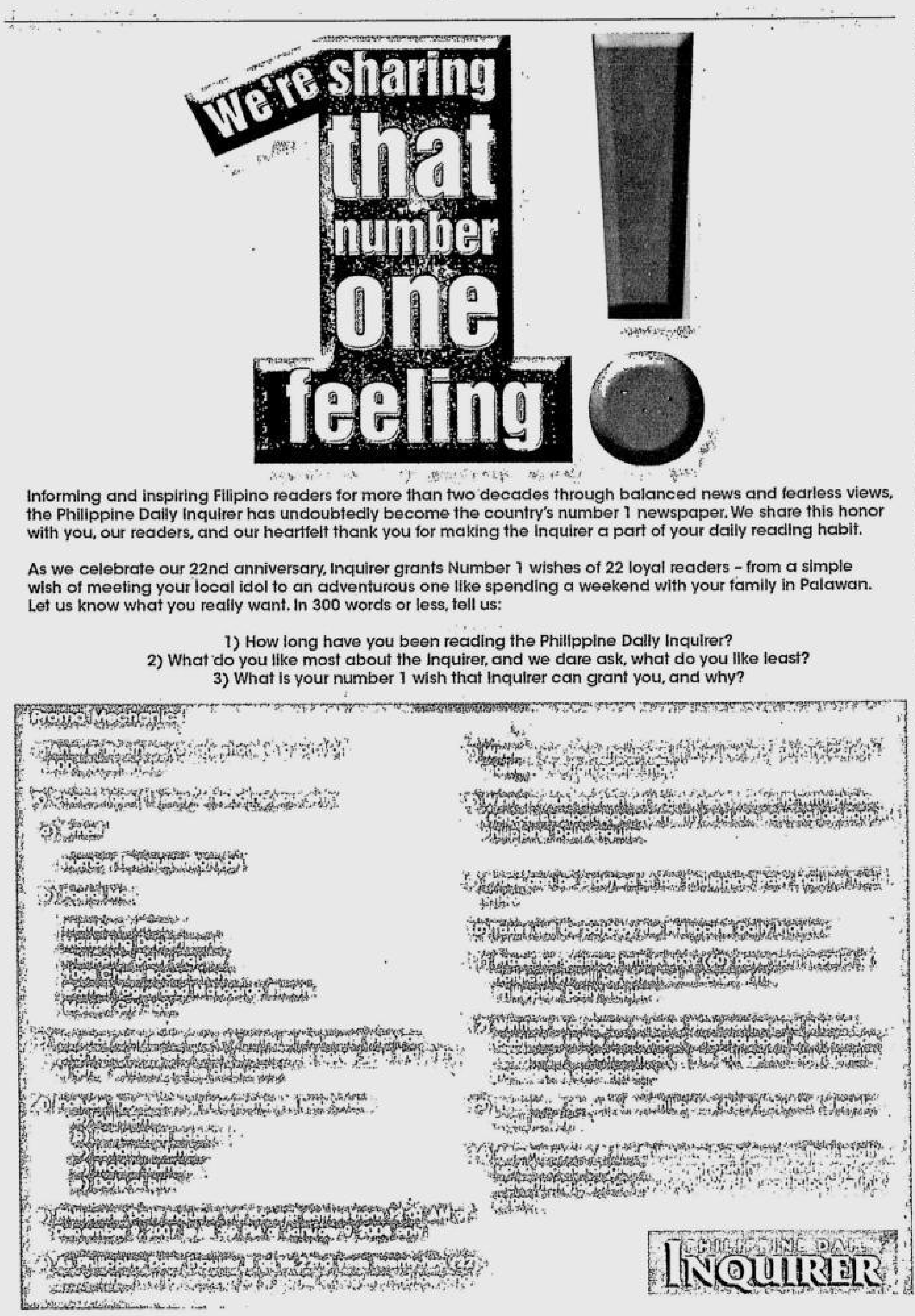
Until then, he says he will just continue to churn out more new designs to serve the needs of his clientele—most of them from their late 20s and above.

He also hopes to eventually open his own physical shop and come out with more made-to-measure designs. While still working toward that goal, he says he will continue to join bazaars, accept orders via his Multiply site, and start consigning some of his wares. "I'm just starting and it's still pretty much hard work all the way. Apart from the design process, I also look for the suitable materials myself, I set up my bazaar space mostly by myself, do the accounting myself, and maintain my website myself," he says.

"It's really hard work, but that's how it is with start-ups. You just have to have that courage to follow your passion. To sustain your business, you have to have passion," he adds.

While still far from being a success, he advises twenty-somethings like himself who want to go into business to just plunge into it.

Batang UP is up there in competitive garment business



Informing and inspiring Filipino readers for more than two decades through balanced news and fearless views, the Philippine Daily Inquirer has undoubtedly become the country's number 1 newspaper. We share this honor with you, our readers, and our heartfelt thank you for making the Inquirer a part of your daily reading habit.

As we celebrate our 22nd anniversary, Inquirer grants Number 1 wishes of 22 loyal readers – from a simple wish of meeting your local idol to an adventurous one like spending a weekend with your family in Palawan. Let us know what you really want. In 300 words or less, tell us:

1) How long have you been reading the Philippine Daily Inquirer?
2) What do you like most about the Inquirer, and we dare ask, what do you like least?
3) What is your number 1 wish that Inquirer can grant you, and why?

[illegible]

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

By Myrna Rodriguez Co
UP Institute for Small-Scale Industries

BATANG UP, HE CALLS HIMSELF. HE grew up inside the University of the Philippines campus, worked in UP, met his wife, Flor in UP, got married in UP, and is now managing his own flourishing garment business based in UP.

Mike Esteves was a grade schooler when he began dabbling in T-shirt printing as an assistant in his Kuya Reynaldo's silk-screen printing business. He learned the trade fast because he was an artist at heart who saw T-shirts as a drawing paper or canvas of sorts.

MIKE Esteves shows off his products

At 15, he begun experimenting with his own designs. He was also his kuya's all around part-time errand and delivery boy, gamely boarding *ikot* jeepneys around the UP campus with bundles of T-shirts on his shoulders.

Even when he went to work at the UP Transportation Training Center as a draftsman, Mike still had half his mind on T-shirt design and printing.

In 1989, Mike resigned his job to pursue his passion. He began his own home-based T-shirt printing business, starting with meager capital and only the most basic equipment—squeegees of various sizes and an exposure table.

In the way of most couples in business, it was decided Flor would keep on working at the UP Business Research Center while Mike tried his luck in the yet uncertain venture. If the business failed, they had Flor's stable employment to fall back on.

Today, 18 years after they made the crucial decision, Mike's Maroon Garments is now a full-fledged garment producer that has integrated its operations to include sewing, design, printing, wholesaling and retailing.

In 1993, they finally acquired an outlet at the UP Shopping Center known as Maroons Boutique and Novelty Shop. By then, too, the business has become stable enough to enable Flor to resign her job and handle the company's accounting and finance requirements.

Their property in Quezon City now combines three distinct units: a garment factory, a printing shop, and the family residence.

The business employs 10-12 workers at a time, has seven sewing machines, and a cutting machine. At the printing department, designing has been computerized although the printing itself still employs the traditional manual process using squeegee sets and exposure tables.

Capacity has gone up to 500 to 1,000 T-shirts a day in the printing unit, depending on the complexity of the design. At the sewing department, up to 300 pieces of assorted garments can be produced daily.

The market has also grown to include universities and schools around the Diliman area as well as various student organizations and private businesses needing promotional giveaways.

Last year, SM began placing orders of T-shirts with Pinoy designs for Kultura, the department store chain's Filipiniana boutique.

This year, Maroon Garments became the first licensed producer and seller of UP T-shirts, jackets, shorts, pants and other paraphernalia including mugs, caps, stickers, bags, umbrellas and gift bags. The company projected a minimum output of P2.6 million worth of goods a year.

There are advantages to a UP license, says Mike. All colleges and units of the university are now Maroon Garments' official market. The Institute for Small-Scale Industries has offered free counseling to improve its work processes. The administration helps promote and market its products. With the upcoming centennial celebration next year, Mike expects a peak year for sales.

There are disadvantages, too—as unauthorized manufacturing and selling of UP paraphernalia have gone on. Because most of them are informal and do not pay license fees and taxes, competitors can afford to offer lower prices.

Flor laments that they have been treated unfairly by the BIR in its recent city mapping operations. "At first, we were complimented for being good taxpayers, which we are. Later, they questioned a technicality—that we failed to note down customers' addresses in the official receipts." Their business is being penalized for this oversight.

Despite setbacks, Maroon Garments remains unfazed. It has a competitive edge after all. With its integrated operations, Mike and Flor can control quality, price, and delivery schedules.

IN THIS ISSUE
The best of theater in 2007 /D1

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UST holds traditional Paskuhan /E5

BANAUE Rice Terraces

We're doing well in protecting our heritage

International heritage experts happy about conservation efforts on the Banaue Rice Terraces

PRIDE OF PLACE
Augusto Villalon

THE PHILIPPINES RECEIVED a hearty thumbs-up from international heritage luminaries for its heritage-conservation efforts.

"The future of the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordillera is in good hands," declared Marc de Caraffe from the International Council for Monuments and Sites (Icomos) of Canada.

De Caraffe is also the president of the international organization's Committee on Vernacular (Traditional) Architecture.

Signifying support for heritage conservation in the country, United States Ambassador Kristie Kenney through the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation supported the meeting but also personally traveled to Banaue to address the meeting and visit the terraces as well.

Icomos is a Paris-based NGO that regulates professional heritage-conservation activities worldwide and is the official adviser to the Unesco World Heritage Committee on cultural-heritage issues.

For the first time, international heritage luminaries joined members of Icomos Philippines in Banaue last week. The meeting coincided with the 12th anniversary of the inscription of five rice-terraces clusters in Ifugao in the prestigious Unesco World Heritage List as "The Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordillera."

Seven years later, the site was transferred to the World Heritage in Danger List, signifying that conservation measures should be intensified to prevent the site from further decay. This led to Unesco and Philippine experts agreeing on a set of measures to rehabilitate the site.

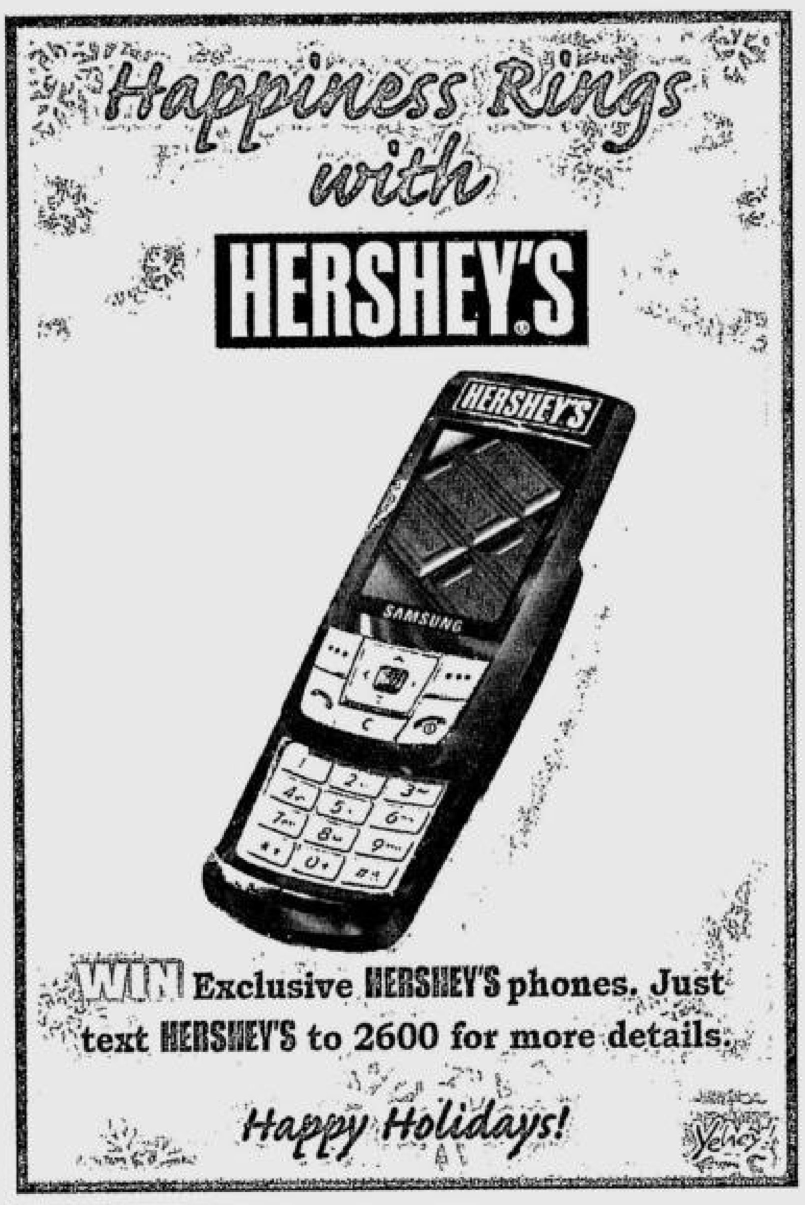
In danger

Respected international specialists arrived from Italy, Finland, France, Germany, Macedonia, United States, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Japan and Korea to join their Philippine counterparts to meet on "Protecting Endangered Traditional Landscapes," focusing on the current status of the five terraces clusters in Ifugao inscribed on the World Heritage in Danger List.

The "In Danger" designation simply means conservation measures for a site on the World Heritage List must be stepped up to prevent its rapid deterioration.

The meeting agreed that the five small terraces clusters (Batad, Hungduan, Hapao, Nagacadan and May-

WE'RE DOING/ C2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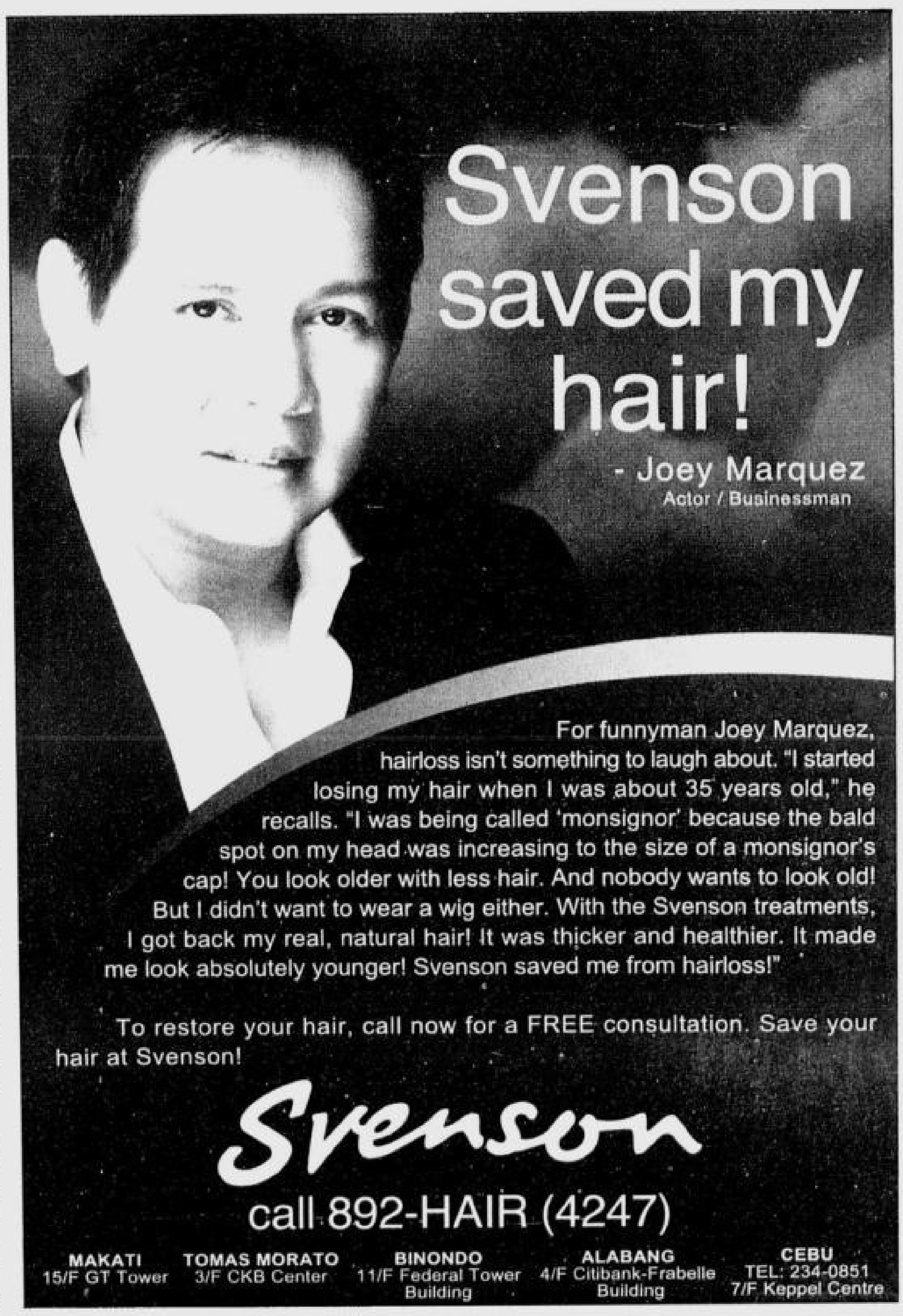
Svenson saved my hair!
- Joey Marquez
Actor / Businessman

For funnyman Joey Marquez, hairloss isn't something to laugh about. "I started losing my hair when I was about 35 years old," he recalls. "I was being called 'monsignor' because the bald spot on my head was increasing to the size of a monsignor's cap! You look older with less hair. And nobody wants to look old! But I didn't want to wear a wig either. With the Svenson treatments, I got back my real, natural hair! It was thicker and healthier. It made me look absolutely younger! Svenson saved me from hairloss!"

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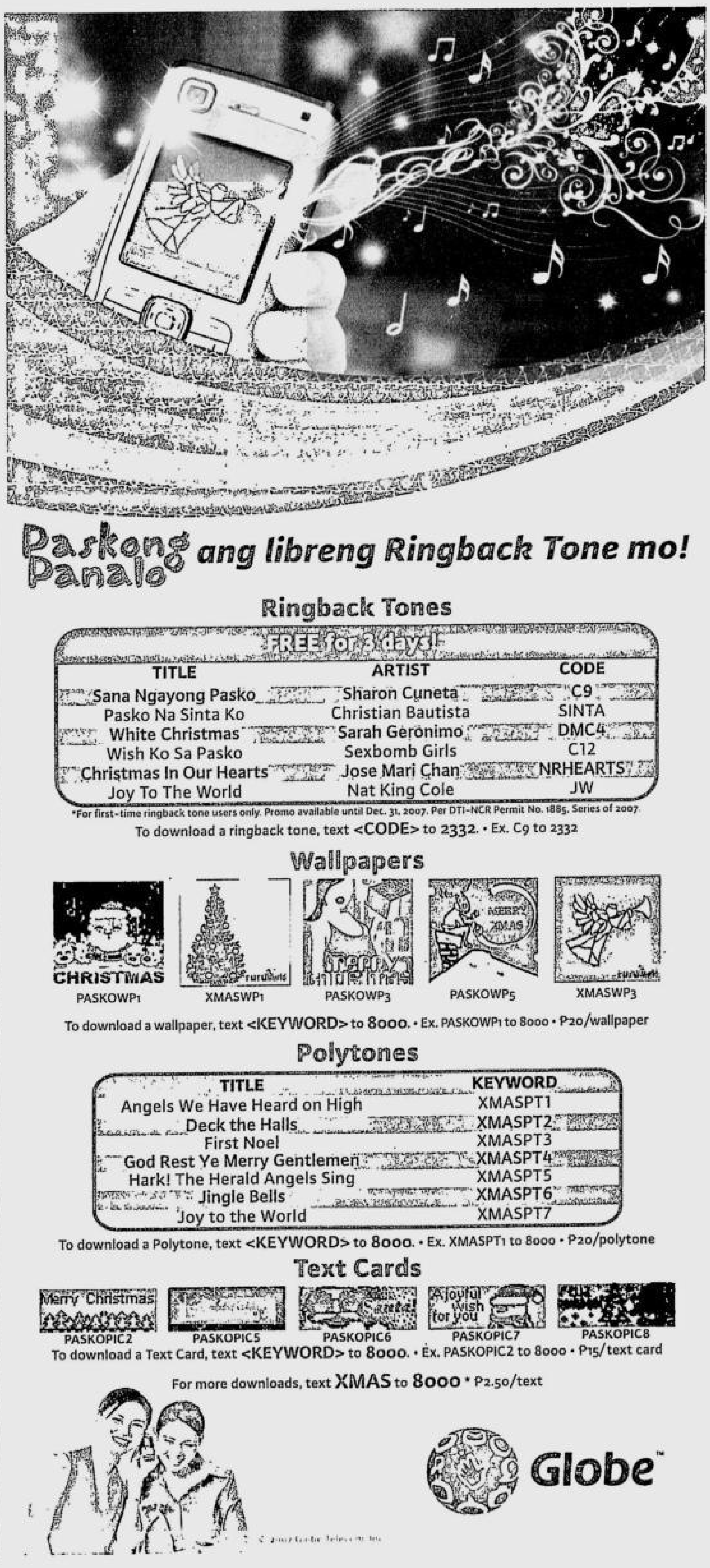
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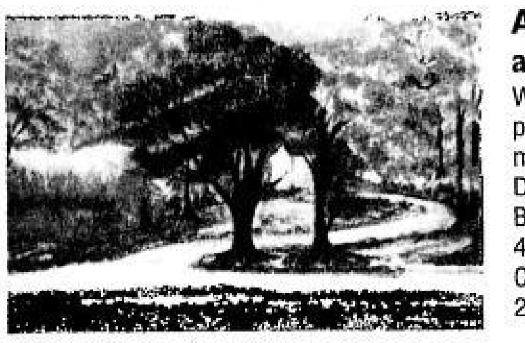
VISUAL ARTS



"GREEN Estate"

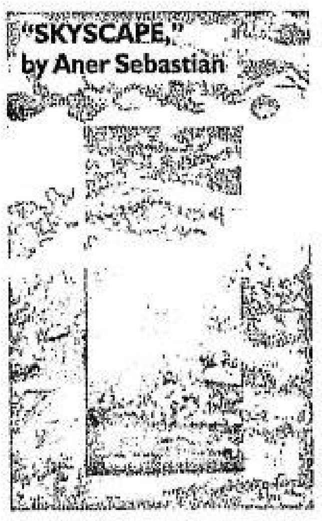
Mendoza at Casino Español

Sonny Mendoza presents his one-man show "Introductory Brushstrokes" Dec. 12 at Casino Español, TM Kalaw, Manila. The exhibit features the artist's works in oil, pastel and watercolor, with landscapes and abstract works. Call 4805063.

'Liars' at White Box

"Liars Go to Heaven," a group exhibit showing metaphors for contradictions and opposites that result in visual paradoxes, is on view until Dec. 15 at White Box, Araneta Center. The exhibit features the works of Gino Bueza, Zean Cabangis, Jonas Eslao, Redd Nacpil and Patch Quinto. Call 4373839.

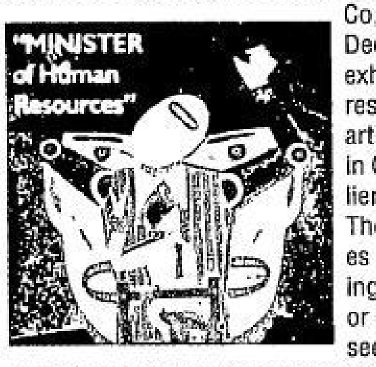
'Qu4tro' at Artes Orientes



"SKYSCAPE," by Aner Sebastian

"Qu4tro" features the works of Aner Sebastian, Janice Liuson-Young, Joseph Villamar and Buds Convocar, artists and art teachers all, until Dec. 20 at Artes Orientes, 2/F, Entertainment Center, SM Mall of Asia, Pasay City. Call 5560590 or 0917-5230877.

Co at Galleria Duemila

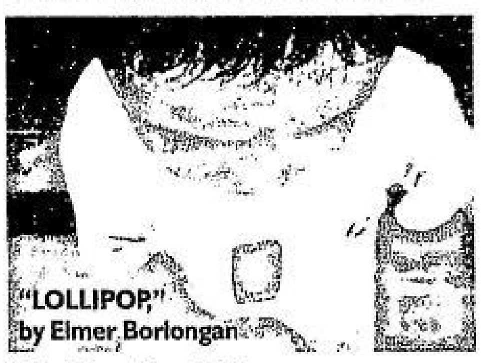


"MINISTER of Human Resources"

Galleria Duemila (210 Loring St., Pasay City) presents "Portraits of China Men" by Charlie Co, until Dec. 31. The exhibit is the result of the artist's stay in China earlier this year. The canvases are bursting with color and what seems like playful imagery, yet the stories behind them are quite serious. Call 8339815.

'Nostalgia' at Mag:net

Mag:net Gallery presents "Nostalgia Is Not What It Used to Be," a group exhibit until Dec. 13 featuring Ronald Achacoso, RM de Leon, Jonathan Olazo and Trek Valdizno. The show depicts the nostalgia for "a modernist future that never happened." Mag:net is at Agcor Bldg., 335 Katipunan Ave., Loyola Heights, Quezon City. Call 9293191.



"LOLLIPOP," by Elmer Borlongan

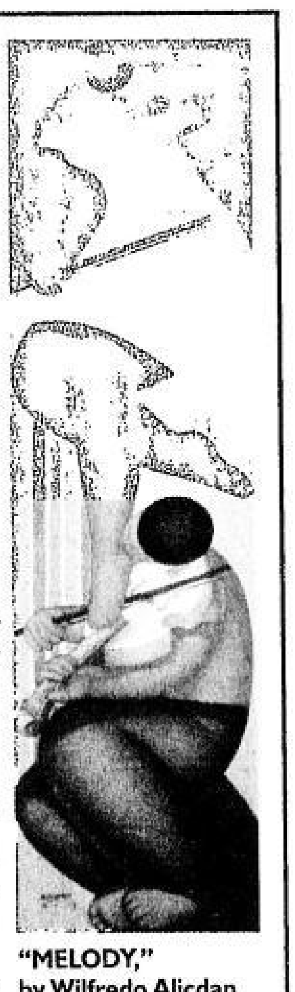
'Kodakan' at Kaida

"TAKING a Bath," by Mikel Parial

"Kodakan," a group exhibit by artists Plet Bolipata, Elmer Borlongan, Ruel Caasi, Carlo Gabuco, Dennis Leonardo, Ferdie Montemayor, Mikel Parial and Mario Parial, is the group's first public foray in photography. The exhibit features a wide range of subjects. It runs until Jan. 5 in Kaida Gallery, 2/F, GFO Bldg., 122 Kamuning Rd., Diliman, QC. Call 4144777 or log on to www.kaidagallery.com.

Alicdan at Rustan's

Wilfredo Alicdan presents the one-man show "Relish" Dec. 15-Jan. 15 in Blue Line Gallery, 4/F, Rustans Makati. Call 8133739 local 260.



"MELODY," by Wilfredo Alicdan

Digital arts program

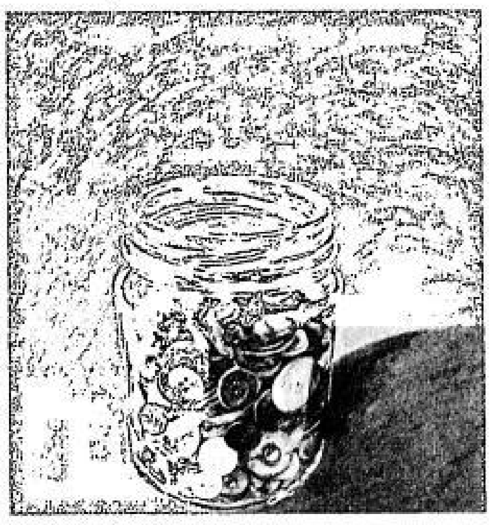
The First Academy of Computer Arts offers Digital Arts Program, a fun and comprehensive course in creative digital design that enables students to develop their skills in visual communication. It covers intensive training in print media, advanced graphic arts and animation media. It is taught by professional digital artists through practical and hands-on work using both Macintosh and Windows platforms. Call 8982724-26 or visit www.firstacademy.net. Their office is located at the 2/F, Saville Bldg., 8728 Paseo de Roxas cor. Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City.

Children's art

Museo Pambata is holding the exhibit "Child's ART (Advocacy, Rights, Thoughts)" at Karapatan Hall until Jan. 31. The show is a collaborative exhibit by 14 students from the Angono Regional Pilot School for the Arts and by 10 children's advocates. The show is part of the annual Zero-In exhibit by a consortium of museums that includes Pambata, Lopez Museum, Ateneo Art Gallery, Ayala Museum and Bahay Tsinoy. Museo Pambata is at the corner of Roxas Blvd. and South Dr., Manila. Call 5231797-98.

Bartolome at Art Center

Passion Arts Gallery presents "In My Place," by Joel Bartolome, at Art Center, 4/F, SM Megamall A, Mandaluyong City. Call 6342422 or e-mail welbartstudio@yahoo.com.ph.



"BUTTONS in a Jar," by Waling Gorospe

Gorospe at Finale

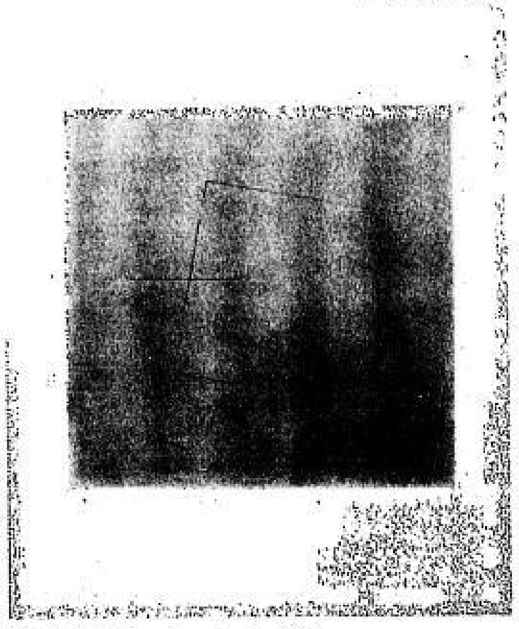
Opening at Finale Art File (4/F, LaO Center, Pasay Rd. and Makati Ave., Makati City) on Dec. 14 is Waling Gorospe's "Sew to Speak." A homage to the humble implements of a dressmaker—safety pin, thimble, buttons, spools of threads and needles—the exhibit conveys the simplicity, honesty and loveliness of objects that work as necessities: tools of creation. Against a field of stark color which, in some instances, haloes the objects as if sacred and inviolable, they are pushed, quite squarely, into viewer's attention—casting slivers of elongated and meaningful shadows. The works embody what the German poet Rilke refers to as "Thingness," asserting the clarity and urgency of the world our eyes sew into visibility. Call 8132310 or visit www.finaleartfile.com.

Patis Tesoro at Lopez

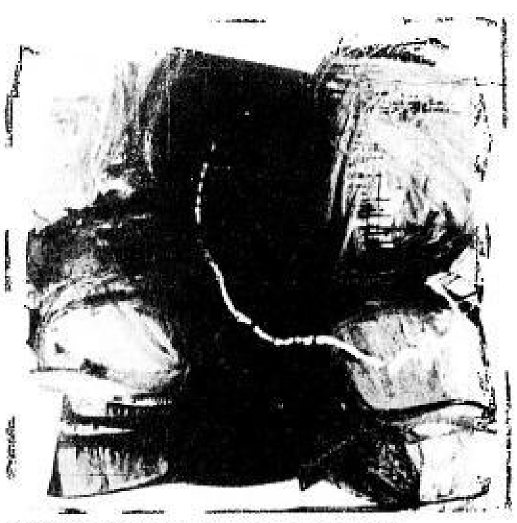
Indigenous-fabric advocate and fashion designer Patis Tesoro will lecture on "Filipiniana as Couture" Jan. 19 at Lopez Museum (Benpres Bldg., Exchange Rd. and Meralco Ave., Pasig City). Tesoro will show how various blends and use of natural dyes provide relatively inexpensive alternatives to enhance indigenous fabrics' competitiveness. She will also show innovative designs to update Filipino costumes. Minimal lecture fee to be charged; discounts offered to students. Call 6312417 or 4042685.

Environmental ethics through abstraction

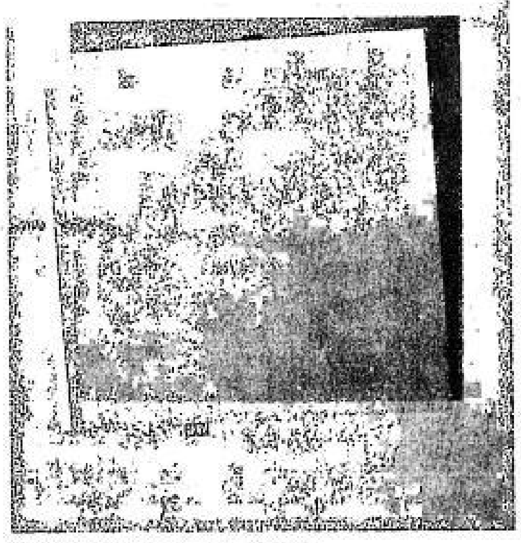
By Constantino C. Tejero



"RAPID Warming Period" 1



"PROPOSED Artificial Landscape"



"RAPID Warming Period" 2

RUEL CAASI'S ART HAS become far-out, figuratively and literally. We see in his latest work not just an acute refinement of technique but also a vaulting ambition in concept.

Consider the austerely titled exhibit "Oil Paintings," 15 pieces in oil and acrylic on canvas and on paper, until Dec. 22 in The Drawing Room, Metrostar Bldg., 1007 Metropolitan Ave., Makati City.

The show comprises two series of paintings of similar forms and composition and varying only in color tonalities. They're supposed to represent the fate of the Great Planet Earth from an abstractionist's perspective.

Using a limited palette of gray, green, slate-blue, red, pink, burned orange, brown, Caasi has effectively conjured the environmental condition through mere splotches and colorfields, both straight and undulating single lines, grid and concentric brushstrokes, geometric shapes, with varying degrees of underpainting, layering of hues, overlapping of color planes, collaging of forms.

Most of the pieces' titles are straight to the point, plain and sharp: "Ozone," "Photosensitive Shade," "Ultraviolet," "Coal and Ore," "Rapid Warming Period," "Catalyst."

Some can be quite poetic, often evocative: "Cast a Circle on the Earth," "Huge Underground," "Open Landscape from Satellite," "Proposed Artificial Landscape."

In "Fresh Meat," the title combined with the color red and the flat application of its various shades evokes something violent and horrific.

There's also an illuminated found object called "Promise of Technology" which speaks for itself. It is the aluminum lid of an oil barrel from United Petrochemicals folded into a half-moon with a red light emanating from in-between, like a lurid filling of a sandwich.

Never content with portraying the planet's condition by merely evoking climate change, oil spill and other environmental disasters wrought by humans, Caasi is here actually embarking on an "ontological journey" through his art.

How does he do it? By giving extra meaning to his use of industrial oil-based pigments and solutions. By metaphorizing the natural behavior of these volatile mediums and their sensitive manipulation.

The exhibition note explains the artist is "exploring the chemical, physical and thermal qualities of these mediums, their trade value in modernization and natural capacity for destruction." Thus, to him, the elements of chance and control in art-making have become a trope for what we're doing to our planet.

That's why there is that unusual focus in the exhibit's title, to remind gallery-goers of its double meaning. What they are seeing are not just oil paintings but also have to do with something beyond the look of canvas and paint.

To sum up Caasi's artistic theory, the note quotes Heidegger on the essence of art: "It is, therefore, an essential kind of human awareness that brings us into relation with the nature

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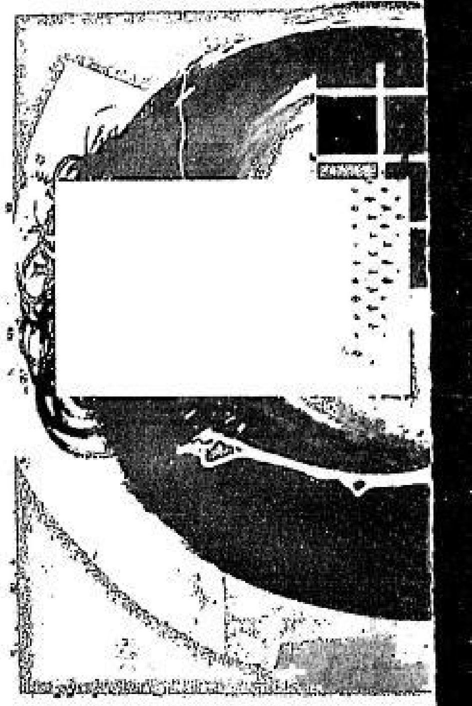

"PHOTO Sensitive Shade" 2

We're doing well in protecting . . .

oyao) were endangered because of their physical deterioration but, more important, the resident population, having difficulty bridging preservation of their heritage with 21st-century lifestyle, was leaving the site in alarming number. Case studies showed a similar phenomenon happening in terraced, agricultural heritage sites in Italy, Ukraine, China and Mexico.

Observing the preservation efforts by the Ifugao provincial government and Save the Terraces Movement (Sitmo), foreign delegates praised the success of the conservation and community-development programs, that most of the Unesco-suggested rehabilitation programs were well underway, which led to the consensus of delegates that it would only be a matter of time before the site would be removed from the World Heritage in Danger List and given a clean bill of health.

The consensus was the long-awaited affirmation for us Filipinos. Despite years of negative reports from the media, our heritage-conservation efforts are back on track.

Lost cause

In countries like the Philippines, preserving heritage is really a lost cause unless preservation is made relevant to its host communities by tying it with development and income generation.

Therefore, presented during the meeting were methods that illustrated various ways to sustainably use heritage as a resource for income generation through community tourism programs, craft development, or harnessing natural resources for sustainable development such as mini-hydroelectric plants.

All participants agreed that the physical repair of the terraces was necessary. However, restoring the terraces and its walls must come together with establishment of cultural and economic opportunities that would make terrace life more viable for the 21st century. Among the positive measures suggested by Unesco is the establishment of additional income-generating opportunities such as community-based cultural and eco-tourism programs.

To further illustrate the benefits of tourism for host communities, field visits for the 70-person group to terrace sites were successfully organized by the provincial government and Sitmo in cooperation with the local communities that were profusely thanked by participants for their professionalism.

Conserving heritage has little relevance to most site residents who live from day to day in survival mode. Therefore Icomos aims to make them aware that among the values of heritage is its use (not exploitation) as a sustainable cultural and eco-tourism resource. Therefore, heritage must be preserved as a livelihood opportunity and also to provide community identity.

Successful community-based heritage projects in the Philippines were presented, such as the Cebu Freedom Trail uniting seaside towns in south Cebu province in a trail of conserved heritage and community-led tourism sponsored by Ramón A
tourism project by
Save Ifugao Terrac
munity-developme

These success s
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Heritage watch

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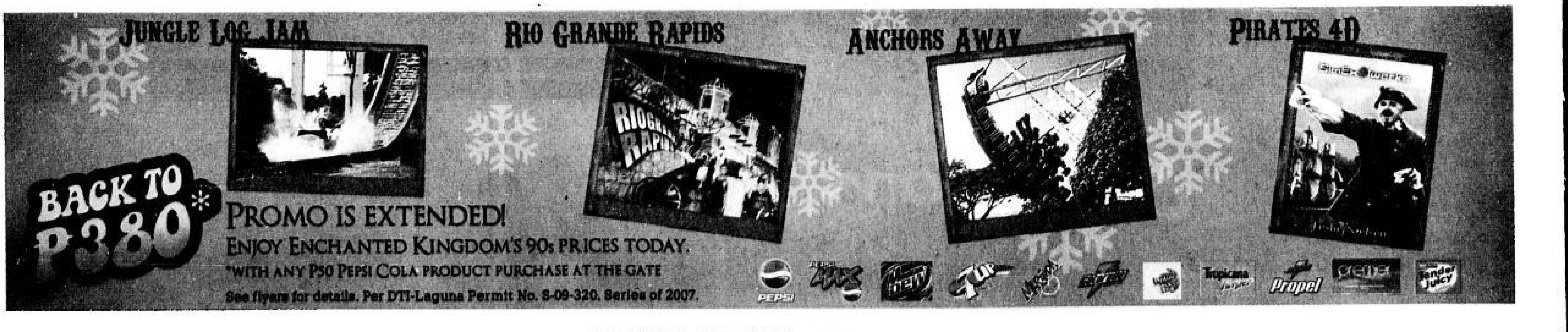

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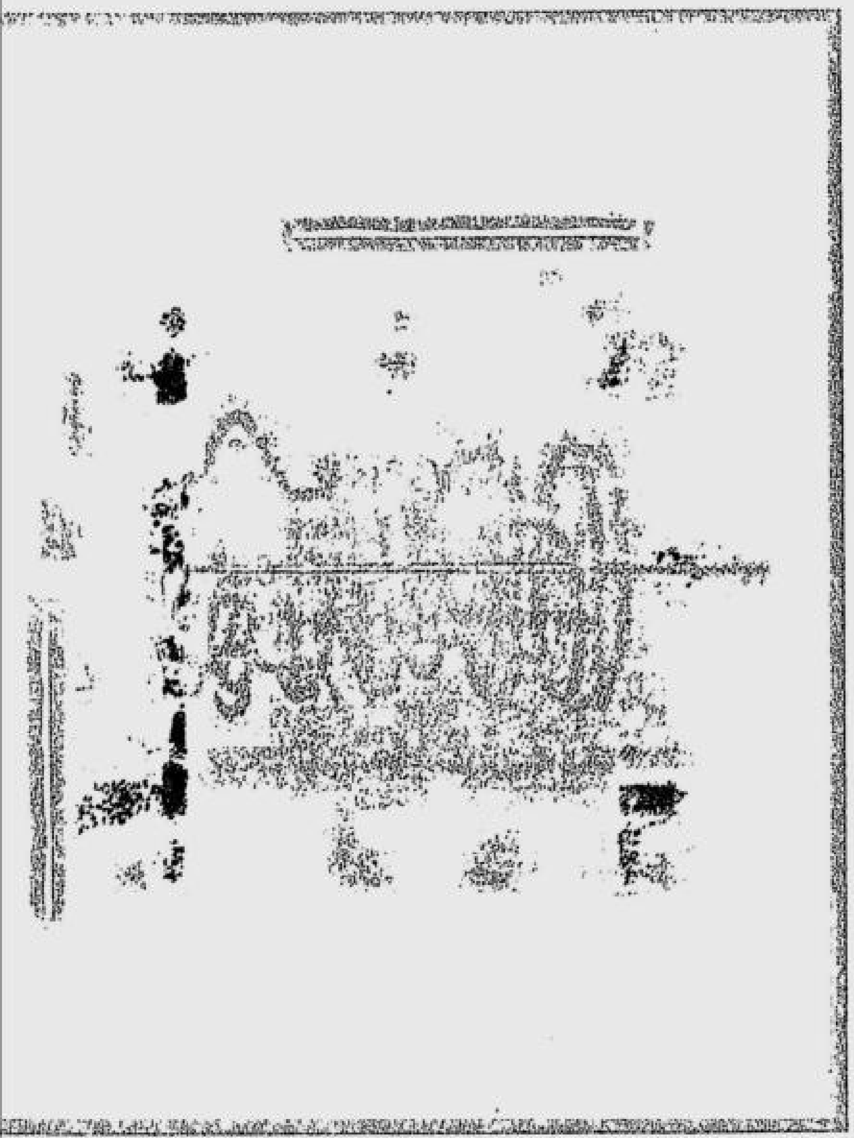

"FRESH Meat"

ur being as human beings dwell on the earth through specific recognition and erstanding of objects and relations that we call our d.".

is show, therefore, is i's way of saying that art not only portray but is also dium for life on this planet. ther words, art is what we y.

From page C1

oitiz Foundation; Bahandi the Bohol community; and s Movement (Sitmo) comt programs in Ifugao.

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marching on the streets, s to come to an agreement heritage. This meeting, alfter the Jai Alai debacle, y, having evolved with those . Congratulations to all.

lcome at *pride.place@-*

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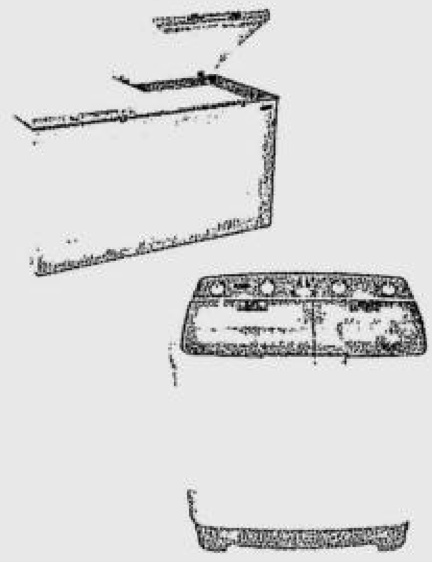

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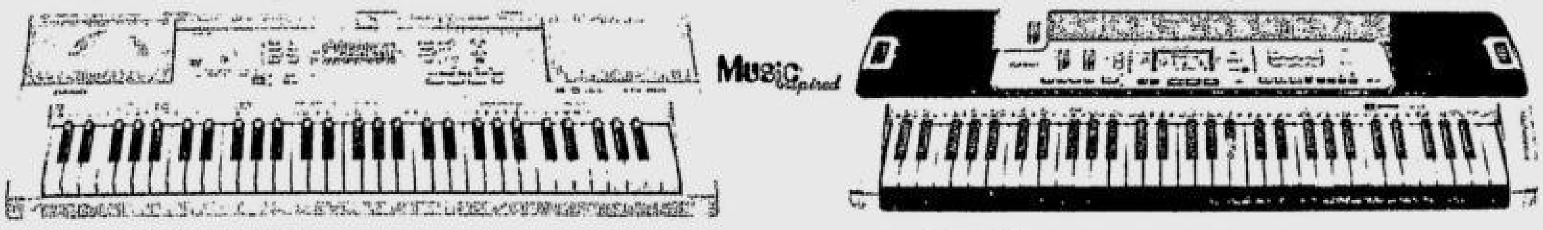

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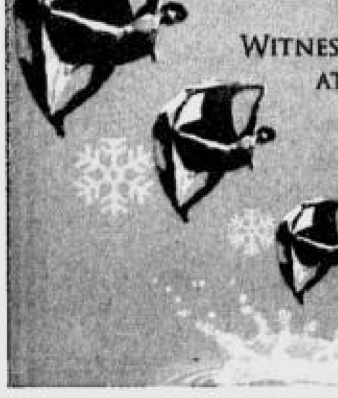

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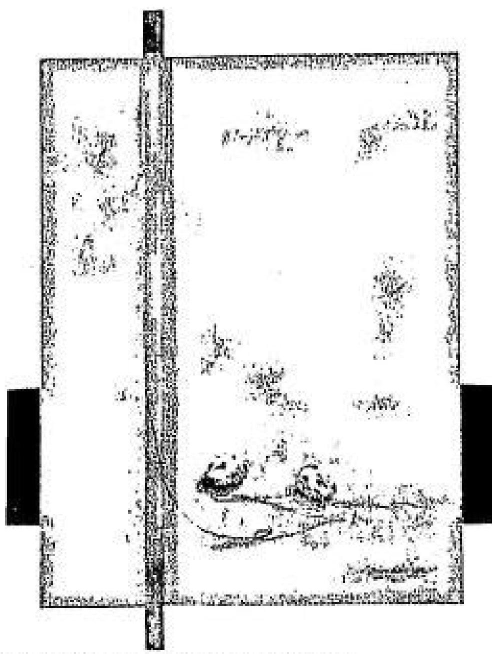
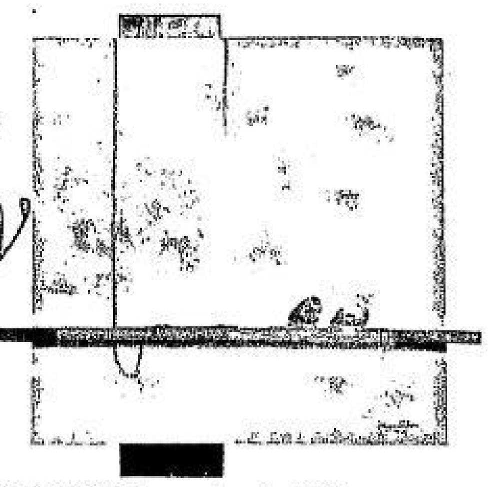
Enigma *of visuality*

By Gary C. Devilles
Contributor


"BEYOND Comprehension" VI

As PEOPLE ARE BOMBARDED BY images from television screen and billboards, and a pervasive culture of visuality maims their capacity to critically think, artists are the prophets in the proverbial wilderness, crying out for reevaluation and radical change.

Anna de Leon's second one-woman show, in 1/of Gallery in Serendra, attempts to show this radical attitude through poetic juxtapositions, dramatic renditions of disjunctive objects, and mix media.


"BEYOND Comprehension" IX

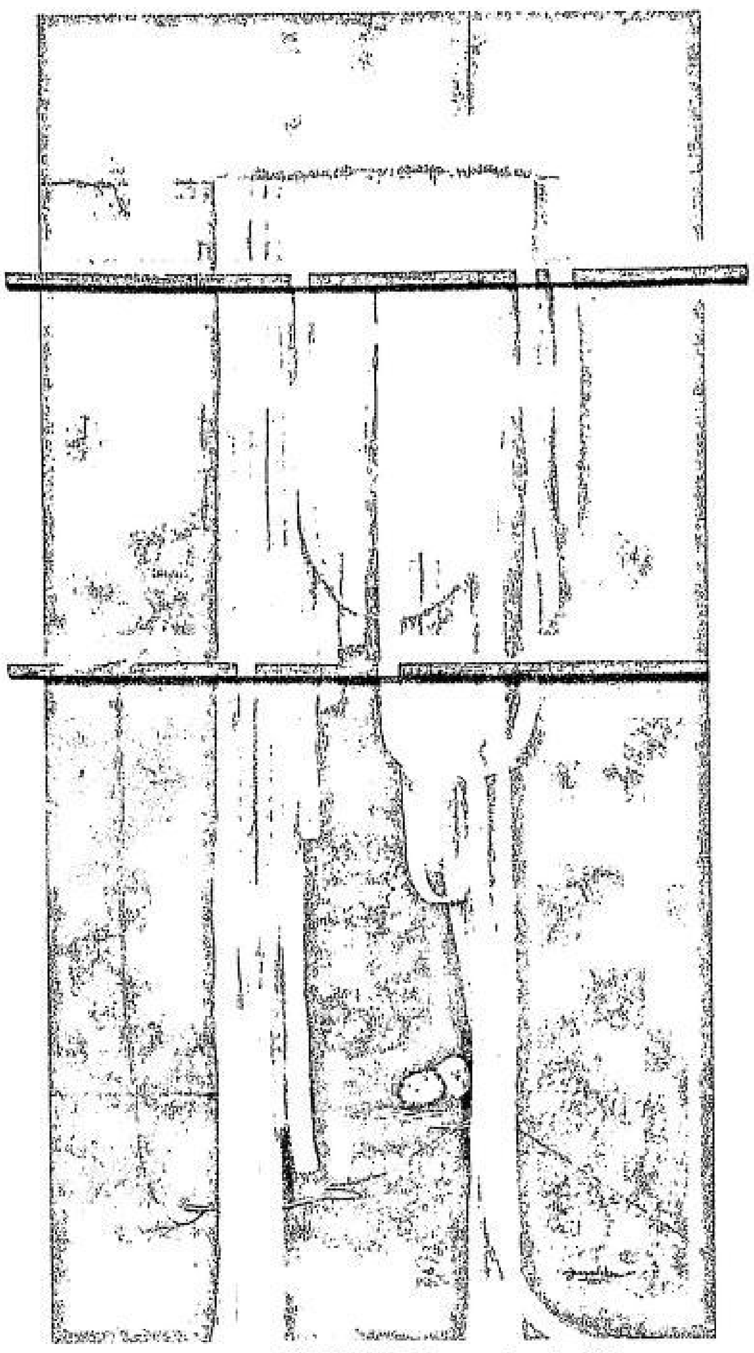
The title of the show, "Beyond Comprehension," may sound elitist and presumptuous, but for De Leon the artist is always in search of answers and contemplating on various issues and problems that beset themselves and society.

Hence, the title for De Leon is never a judgment on the inaccessibility of art production but a quiet reflection on the resistance inherent in art itself—art resisting interpretation and clamoring for more; art resisting to be categorized in a style or in a school of thought; and even perhaps art refusing to be commodified.

It is not unexpected then that De Leon's collection teems with limitless possibilities for introspection. In one piece, the foreground reveals strips of white, gauze-like fabric hanging from a thin wire with a single blue string hanging loose, and where on a corner of the floor rest two quail eggs. Can this be another playful rendition of Nature against man/woman, as the fabric is definitely man/woman-made and the eggs are part of nature?

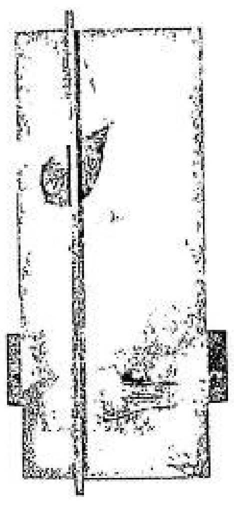
Such theme has always fascinated artists from time immemorial, and De Leon is no stranger in this dichotomy as she herself as an artist reckons with transcending her nature, cognizant of the fact that society today seems to offer no place for many artists like her.

How many artists are discouraged to take up Fine Arts, Music, Creative Writing, or even Journalism, knowing that the only way to survive in a so called fast-paced world is by taking up Engineering, Computer Education, and Nursing? How do we really care for our indigenous artists? What incentives do we give to the young so they are encouraged to study and pursue careers on the arts?


"BEYOND Comprehension" I

It seems the litany of frustrations will show that we have been contradicting our nature such that the eggs depicted in these collections become an indictment also of our stunted growth and the strings and fabric become the meaningless gestures that fail to cohere or be woven into a seamless political will.

Anna de Leon may show us the promise that awaits us for those in the forefront who live and fight against meaninglessness. But she also warns us how her art can become a poor refuge for our defamed humanity.


"BEYOND Comprehension" III

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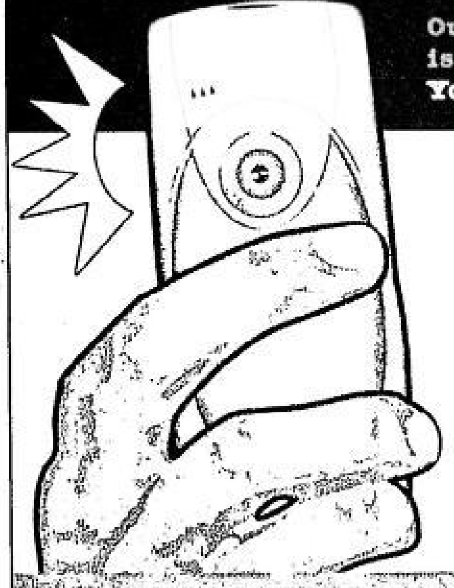

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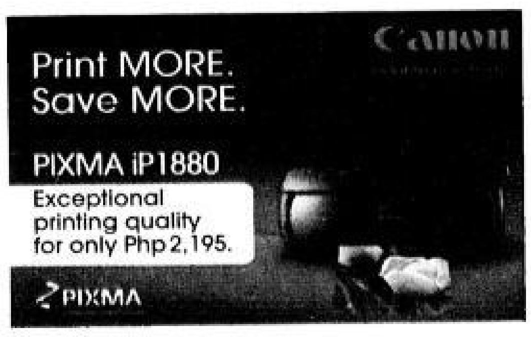
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BEST OF THEATER 2007

Bravo!

By Gibbs Cadiz

BY RIGHT, 2007 SHOULD have been a red-letter year for local theater.

Repertory Philippines and the Philippine Educational Theater Association (Peta), the two most established and consistent professional drama companies in the country, marked their 40th anniversary this year.

Between them, they have racked up a

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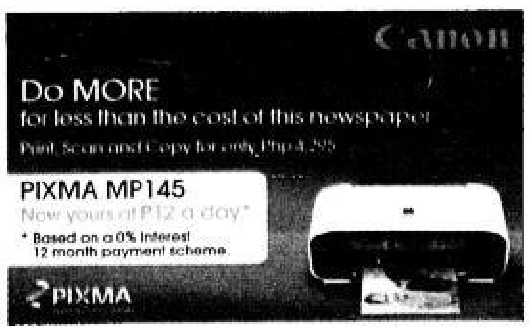
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Here's the cream of the crop of Manila theater in 2007—shows and performances worth celebrating any time

MICHAEL Williams, Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo and Joaqui Valdes in the New Voice Company production of Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods," directed by Rito Asilo

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SMART
THE POWER TO LEAD

Bravo!

RACHEL Alejandro and Felix Rivera in the Lopez-Marx-Whitty musical "Avenue Q," directed by Bobby Garcia for Atlantis Productions

From page D1

staggering, unbroken resumé of plays and performances that defines, to a large extent, the history and trajectory of modern Philippine theater.

But they're not the only ones to feel a sense of accomplishment this year. Gantimpala Theater also celebrated its 30th anniversary, while Tanghalang Pilipino notched its 20th birthday in the business.

Milestones all, but the theater companies by and large held back on the self-congratulations—no grand fetes or nostalgic tributes—and just went about what they did best: mount plays.

The recent passing of esteemed playwright Rene Villanueva also cast a pall on the closing weeks of what has been another challenging but fecund year for the country's drama companies. Villanueva played a valuable part in the development of Filipino-language theater, working ceaselessly through often-lonely decades to write, teach and open minds through drama.

As with Villanueva's quiet example, Rep and Peta and their younger counterparts have dispensed with the frills even in this, their banner year, to carry on with the business of show.

Here's the cream of the crop of Manila theater in 2007—productions and performances worth celebrating any time.

Best Play (one act)

"Ellas Inocentes" (Layeta Bucoy, writer; Tuxqs Rutaquio, dir.). A hypnotic, heartbreaking portrait of a pair of warped childhoods, featuring astonishing performances and astute direction. Simply the most compelling entry in this year's Virgin Labfest.

Honorable mentions: "Three Sisters" (Yoji Sakate; José Estrella, dir.); "Mga Obra ni Maestra" (Niel de Mesa, writer/director); "Ang Unang Aswang" (Rody Vera) and "Walang Iwanan" (Rene Villanueva) from "Philippine Bedtime Stories" (Toshihisa Yoshida, dir.); "Forever" (Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero; Tony Espejo, dir.)

Best Play (full-length)

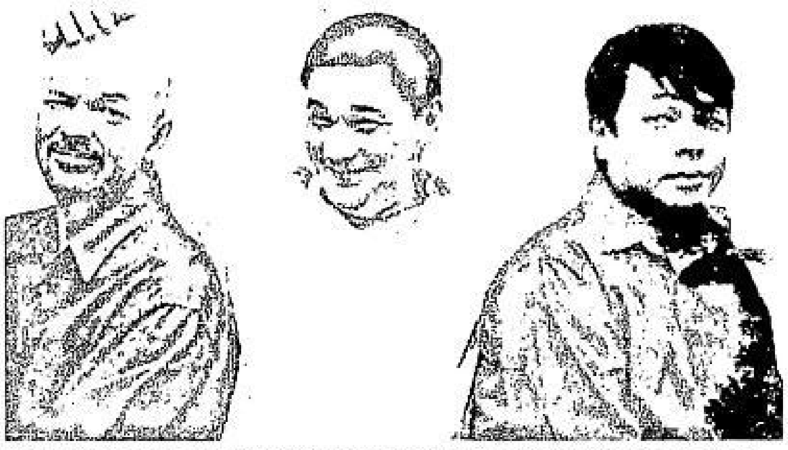
"Insiang" (Mario O' Hara; Chris Millado, dir.) Brocka's classic film reworked as a brilliant piece of contemporary social realist theater, redolent of the fetid air of lives trapped in shantytown hell. A definitive production, and a triumph for everyone concerned.

Honorable mentions: "Art" (Yasmina Reza's "Art," translated by Lito Abaño; Bart Guingona, dir.); "Belong Puti" (Nonon Padilla, writer/director); "Romulus D' Grayt" (Friedrich Durenmatt's "Romulus the Great," translated by Jerry Respeto; Maribel Legarda, dir.); "Sa Ngalan ng Anak" (Arthur Miller's "All My Sons," translated by Jerry Respeto; Amiel Leonardia, dir.); "Fluid" (Floy Quintos, writer/director); "As You Like It" (William Shakespeare; Jose Estrella, dir.); "Sandaang Panaginip" (Rene Villanueva; Jerry Respeto, dir.)

Best Actor-Play

Ricky Davao ("Art"). His part as a corrupt, violent henchman in "Insiang" was splashier, but Davao's weakling of a character in "Art" offered a fuller dramatic arc—one that he scaled fearlessly, hilariously, with pitch-perfect skill.

SHEENLY Vee Gener and Mailes Kanapi in Mario O'Hara's "Insiang," directed for Tanghalang Pilipino by Chris Millado



MICHAEL de Mesa, Ricky Davao and Jett Pangan in Yasmina Reza's "Art," translated by Lito Abaño and directed by Bart Guingona for Actor's Actors Inc.

ONE-THIRD of the kiddie cast of AAI's "Children's Letters to God," led by Julia Abueva (front, right)

CB GARRUCHO in Nonon Padilla's "Belong Puti" for Peta

Honorable mentions: Mario O'Hara ("Belong Puti"); Dido de la Paz ("Romulus D' Grayt"); Teroy Guzman and Mario Magallona ("Sa Ngalan ng Anak"); Michael de Mesa and Jett Pangan ("Art"); Rem Zamora ("Glorious"); Ricky Davao ("Insiang"); Andoy Ranay ("Dogeaters"); Rody Vera ("Philippine Bedtime Stories"); Oliver Usison ("Gaybirds"); Niccolo Manahan ("Love's Labour's Lost"); Ricky Rivero and Riki Benedicto ("My Padir Is an OFW")

Best Actress-Play

Mailes Kanapi ("Insiang"). A *tour de force*. Playing a woman numbed beyond measure and aged beyond her years, Kanapi refused to play her character for sympathy, thereby drawing more of ours with her sensual, bone-chilling performance.

Honorable mentions: CB Garrucho ("Belong Puti"); Sheenly Vee Gener ("Insiang"); Joy Virata ("Glorious"); Laurice Guillen ("The Glass Menagerie"); Lovely Balili and Ness Roque ("Ellas Inocentes"); Frances Makil-Ignacio ("Sa Ngalan ng Anak"); Kalila Aguilos ("Ang Mga Huwad"); Trency Caga-anan and Missy Maramara ("Fluid"); Nathasia Garrucha ("As You Like It"); Jenny Jamora ("Love's Labour's Lost"); Abbey Gonzales ("Mga Obra ni Maestra")

Best Featured Actor-Play

Paolo O'Hara ("As You Like It"). Shakespearean whimsy found its ribald Pinoy embodiment in O'Hara, whose unabashed take on the throwaway part of a jester gave this play's rather knotty proceedings an air of slap-happy buoyancy.

Honorable mentions: Lou Veloso ("Belong Puti"); Jejie Esguerra ("Gaybirds"); Paolo Rodriguez and Rez Cortez ("Dogeaters"); Paolo O'Hara ("Ang Mga Huwad"); Melvin Lee and Jeff Henson Dy ("Romulus D' Grayt")

Best Featured Actress-Play

Mae Paner ("Insiang"). A gale force of gritty, artless acting, Paner delivered her opening monologue with the grace of a sonic boom, and from there never let go of the audience until the bloody finale.

Honorable mentions: Peewee O'Hara ("Insiang"); Chari Arespacochaga ("Dogeaters"); Sherry Lara ("Belong Puti"); Diana Malahay ("Sa Ngalan ng Anak")

Best Musical

"Avenue Q" (music by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, book by Jeff Whitty; Bobby Garcia and Chari Arespacochaga, dirs.). Garcia's comeback to the Philippine stage after his HK Disneyland stint proved to be an exceedingly entertaining and polished show. He would stumble with a stolid, antiseptic, ploddingly literal "Dogeaters," but with "Avenue Q," he was on fine footing.

"Into the Woods" (music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, book by James Lapine; Rito Asilo, dir.). "Tremendous verve, expressiveness and artistry," we wrote in our review of this ambitious, adventurous production. We're not taking our words back.

Honorable mentions: "High School Musical" (music adaptation by Bryan Louiselle, book by David Simpatico; Audie Gemora, dir.); "Children's Letters to God" (music by David Evans, lyrics by Douglas J. Cohen; Bart Guingona, dir.); "Pilipinas Circa 1907" (musical direction by Chino Toledo, libretto by Nicanor Tiongson; Dennis Marasigan, dir.); "Fiddler on the Roof" (music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick; Baby Barredo and Robbie Guevara, dirs.); "Song & Dance" (music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, lyrics by Don Black; Joy Virata, dir.)

Best Actor-Musical

Felix Rivera ("Avenue Q"). A breakthrough performance of winning charm, energy and sensitivity. Playgoers, say hello to your newest musical-theater leading man.

Honorable mentions: Michael Williams ("Into the Woods"); Tyler Alan Strand and Miguel Faustmann ("Fiddler on the Roof"); Nar Cabico ("ZsaZsa Zaturnnah"); Miguel Castro ("Pilipinas Circa 1907"); Sam Concepcion ("High School Musical"); Nacho Tambunting ("Children's Letters to God")

Best Actress-Musical

Rachel Alejandro ("Avenue Q"). The best word for her turn here is exquisite, if not awesome. Among the many pleasures of this musical, Alejandro's aching rendition of "There's a Fine, Fine Line" will be remembered for some time.

Honorable mentions: Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo, Cathy Azanza and Lynn Sherman ("Into the Woods"); Carla Guevara-Laforteza ("Song & Dance"); Ana Feleo and Lani Ligot ("Pilipinas Circa 1907"); Joy Virata ("Fiddler on the Roof"); Natasha Cabrera ("The Silent Soprano"); Nathasia Garrucha ("Basilia ng Malolos"); Cheska Ortega ("High School Musical"); Julia Abueva ("Children's Letters to God")

Best Featured Actor-Musical

Joaqui Valdes ("Into the Woods). The boy who played Edmund in Trumpets' "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" many years back is now a strapping young man, and in "Into the Woods" he would serve up an endearingly bittersweet, warm-blooded character in Jack.

Honorable mentions: Joel Trinidad ("Avenue Q"); Onyl Torres ("The Silent Soprano"); Nazer Salcedo and Bong Cabrera ("Pilipinas Circa 1907"); PJ Valerio ("High School Musical")

Best Featured Actress-Musical

Julia Abueva ("Into the Woods"). Frighteningly talented at 12 years old, with a strong, lovely voice and a transfixing sense of self-assurance, Abueva is bound to be the next big thing in musicals, if she isn't already. Watch out for her.

Honorable mentions: Sheila Francisco ("High School Musical"); Frenchie Dy ("Avenue Q"); Cris Villonco ("Fiddler on the Roof"); Crisel Consunji ("Into the Woods"); Diana Alferez and Nikki Ventosa ("Basilia ng Malolos"); Jing Reyna, Wenah Nagales and Mia Bolaños ("Pilipinas Circa 1907")

E-mail the author at gcadiz@inquirer.com.ph, visit www.gibbscadiz.com

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Standing ovations for Pierri, Rashkovskiy

From page D4

your work and the process of creation is entirely by you, with no directors, co-actors and cameramen involved," he said. "It's a world of art everyone should explore because it has a different reward not found in awards and box-office results."

"Dolce Vita" will run till the end of December. Call 3765746.

Eddie Yap formula

Impresarios plagued by concert deficits should learn a lesson from concert organizer Eddie Yap, whose "Adeste Fideles" last year at Santuario de San Antonio and this year at PICC were both a commercial and artistic success.

Yap is a wizard at getting sponsors (Credit Suisse) and networking (Management Association of the Philippines, Kawal Foundations and Haven Foundations). He makes sure the concert gets worthy charity recipients.

His latest concert had something for the seasoned followers of classical music and a little something for the followers of pop. He pitted soprano Rachelle Gerodias (unbeatable in "Lights of a Million Mornings") with pop singer Vina Morales.

The concert also had the powerful presence of the Philippine Madrigal Singers as well as performances by McDonald's George Yang and the Chiang Kai Shek Choir.

The Eddie Yap concert commandments: Make sure you have a good sponsor; find a good marketing arm; maximize networking with organizations; go easy on production expenses; go slow on discounted tickets; and minimize complimentary tickets.

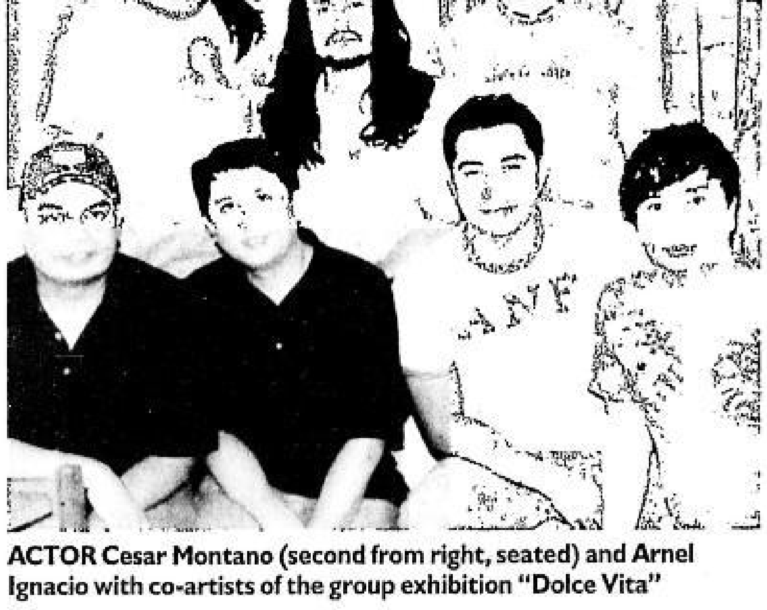
Next time you want both financial and artistic success in classical music, do an Eddie Yap.

Aliw awards

Congratulations to pianist Mary Anne Espina who won last week's Aliw Award for Best Instrumentalist. She won over violinists John Lesaca and Jay Cayuca, saxophone player Tots Tolentino and guitar player Aiza Seguerra.

Tenor Montet Acoymo and soprano Alegria Ferrer won in the Classical Singers category.

It's good that classical artists are getting recognition from award-giving bodies.



ACTOR Cesar Montano (second from right, seated) and Arnel Ignacio with co-artists of the group exhibition "Dolce Vita"

Espina will soon be heard in an intimate house concert with pianist Najib Ismail in the Talisay, Negros Occidental, residence of pianist Leonor Kilayko.

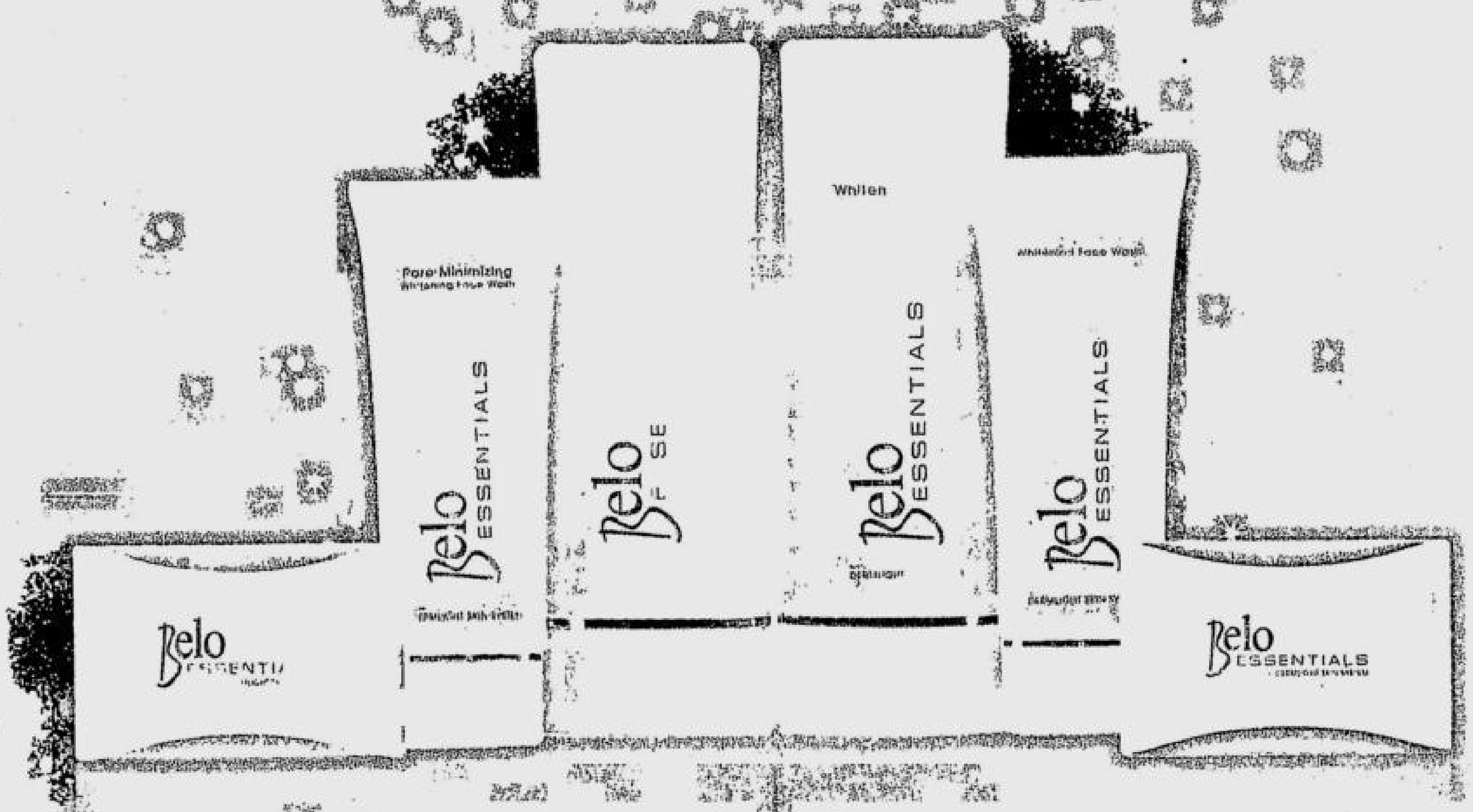
Must-read

A must-read is Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's "Legends & Adventures," the sequel to her earlier autobiography "Myself, Elsewhere."

In this book, Ms Nakpil gives an intimate account of her life in the aftermath of the Japanese Occupation. For book inquiries, call 8172940.

Correction: Pianist Jude Areopagita texted to say George Yang's rendition of Puccini's "Nessun Dorma" in Yang's latest CD is not transposed as I had written. I stand corrected.

Star white.
Star bright.



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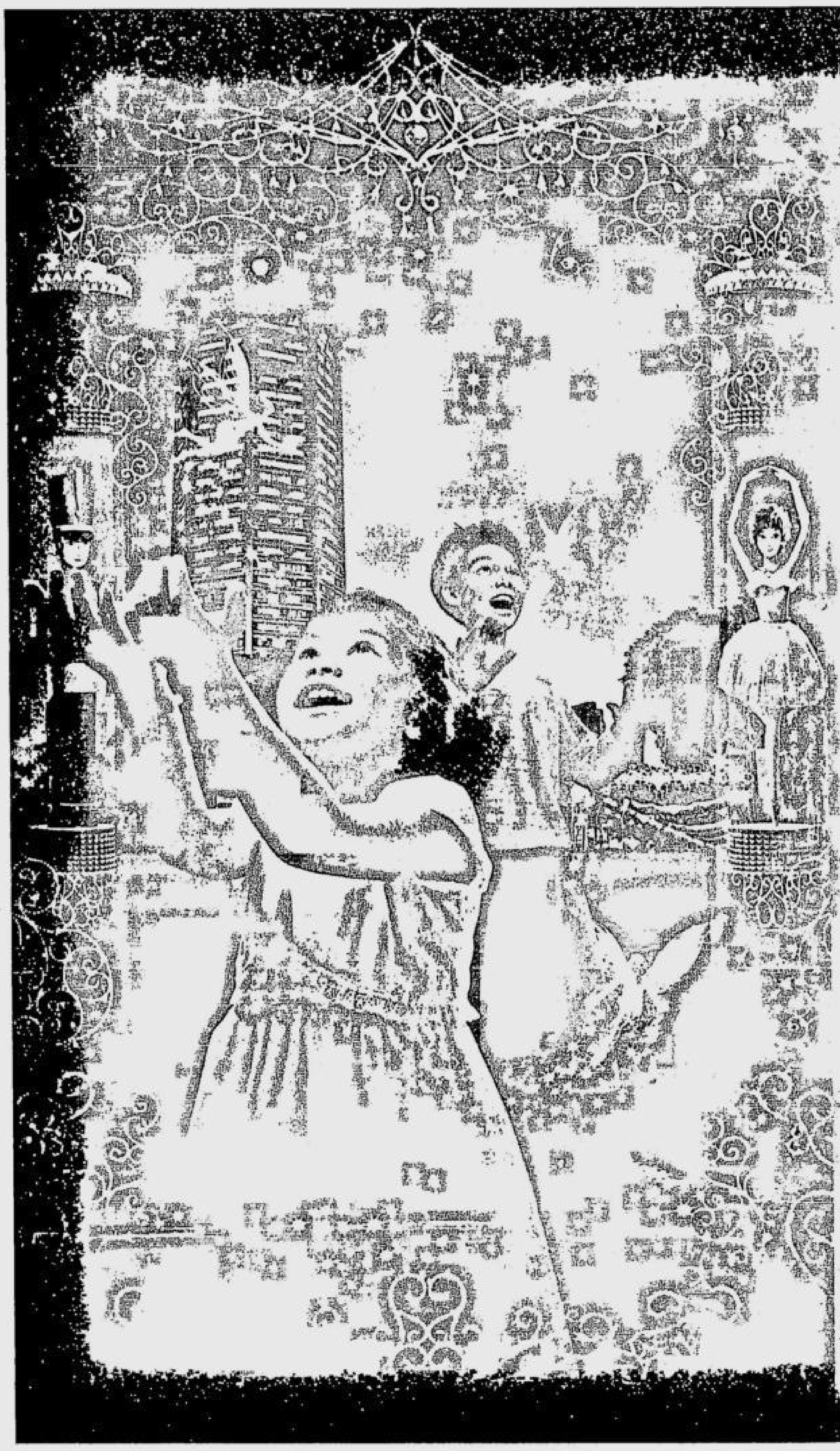

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- ○ VivoCity: 1, 8, 15 & 22 Dec till 12 midnight
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So book your tickets now with your favorite travel agent for an unforgettable holiday season in Singapore!

[illegible]

UNIQUELY
Singapore

CLASSICAL guitarist Alvaro Pierri (center) backstage with guitar convert Elisa Salapantan and Jullie Yap Daza

CONCERT organizer Eddie Yap

SOPRANO Rachelle Gerodias

PIANIST Ilya Rashkovskiy (left) with fans backstage at Philamlife Theater

Standing ovations for Pierri, Rashkovskiy

By **Pablo Tariman**, *Contributor*

CLASSICAL GUITARIST ALVARO Pierri and pianist Ilya Rashkovskiy got standing ovations for their Manila concerts.

Pierri's performance galvanized the guitar community of Metro Manila as guitar teachers and students from the UST Conservatory of Music, Sta. Isabel Music Department, St. Scholastica's College Music Department, and UP College of Music, among others, flocked to the concert.

Pierri didn't just perform for the guitar aficionados; he had a dialogue with them on the eve of his performance at Grappas Restaurant (dinner courtesy of Bonjin Bolinao and guitar student Maan Hontiveros).

Pierri was given a post-concert reception at Bistro Remedios (courtesy of Larry Cruz and Gemma Cruz Araneta). Later, he was again given a standing ovation by guitar teachers and students at Café Adriatico. The meeting was part-dialogue and part-masterclass, and showed how far-reaching the interest for classical guitar is.

Jullie Yap Daza praised the musician: "Pierri played the guitar like a baby, strumming tenderly, making each string vibrate like silk, making what little hair I had on my arm stand in ecstasy!"

As for Rashkovskiy, there was no doubt he eclipsed his 2006 Manila debut performance with his new Manila program inspired by dance.

Odette Alcantara said she could hear four pianos when she closed her eyes to hear Liszt's "Mephisto" Waltz and "Bodjie."

Mimi Sison, who hosted a midnight treat for the Russian pianist after the performance, said the pianist just got better and better.

Moved by overwhelming audience response, Rashkovskiy told me: "What will happen to those audiences if you say goodbye to concert-organizing?"

My heartfelt thanks to the Philippine American Life Insurance Company and Manila Pavilion for helping me keep classical music alive in the last three years. The Great Performance Series was conceived and realized with very little resources.

Art and music at Bellissimo

With guitar and flute music in the background, and with the eminent Behn Cervantes as moderator, the dialogue with artists who had other callings was held during the recent opening of "Dolce Vita," a group exhibition at Bellissimo Restorante in Quezon City.

The artists were led by actor Cesar Montano and included Arnel Ignacio, Grandier Bella, Florence Cinco, Jes Evangelista, Norlie Meimban and Raul Roco Jr.

It's foregone conclusion is that photorealist Bella, mixed-media painter Cinco, abstractionist Evangelista, expressionist Meimban and surrealist Roco do their art for the sheer pleasure of it. But what do actors and TV personalities get when they dabble in art?

Ignacio said painting gave him relief from the commercialism of television and time to realize there is more to living than just entertaining TV audiences.

"When I paint," he said, "I forget about the madness of TV ratings. I just become myself and express other profound realities outside of television. Painting gives me another high and a fulfillment outside the world of entertainment intrigues."

Montano said painting gave him a fulfillment better than acting and singing.

"At the end of the day, it's just you and

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Per DTI-NCR series no. 4285 of 2007, Promo Period: Dec. 3, 2007 to Jan. 7, 2008

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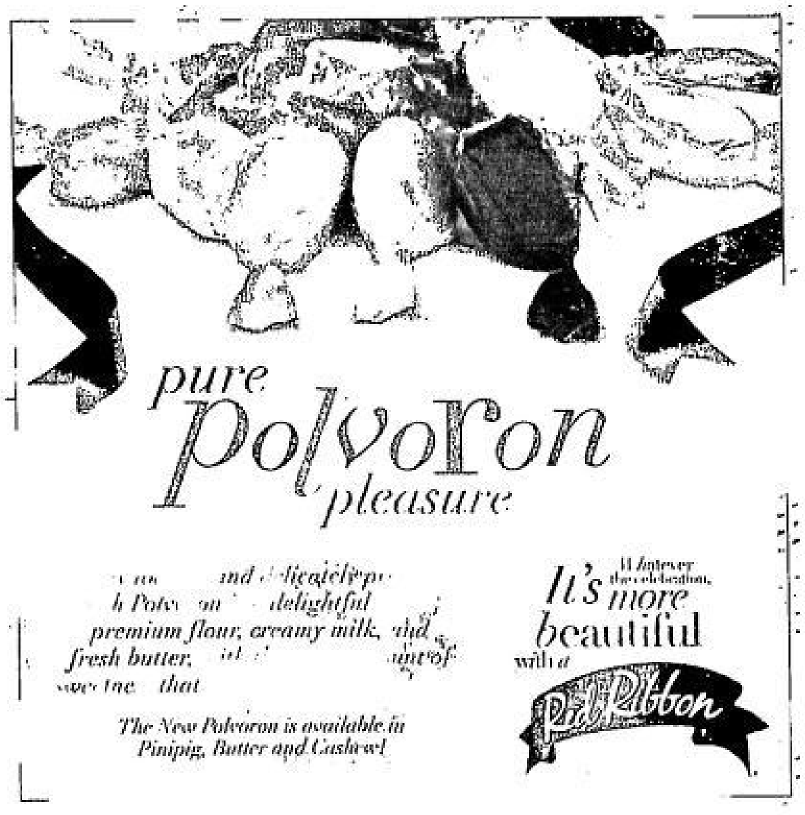
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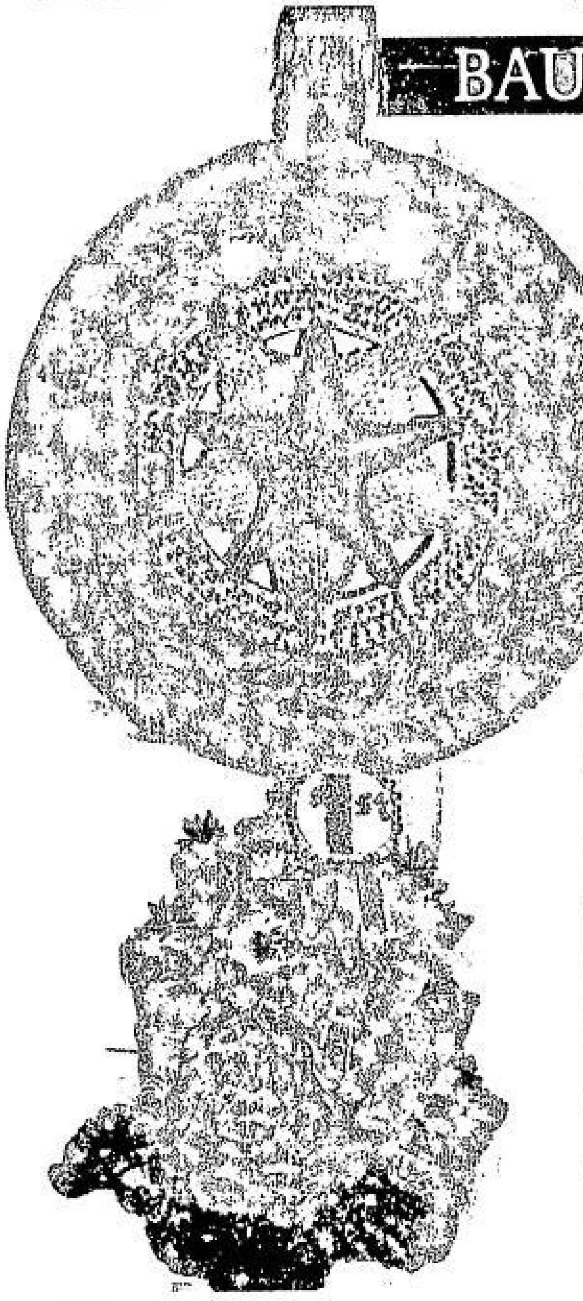
BAUAN PAROL AT CCP

They light up our life

For 29 years now, the young people of Bauan, Batangas, have been making truly original Christmas lanterns from indigenous materials


RICE grains and hay

IT ALL STARTED 29 YEARS ago, when the faculty of Bauan High School (BHS) in Batangas, headed by engineer Vicente Cordero, was alarmed by the increasing criminal activities involving teenagers in schools. So the group tried to encourage students to develop their artistic abilities through the Parulan (lantern-making) contest.

Today, the BHS continues the tradition by encouraging its students to use indigenous organic materials such as betel and *bunga* nuts, rice, corn husks, fish scales, citrus fruits, pistachio shells, cigarettes, garlic, matches, *guyabano* and *alibangbang* leaves, coconut tree, *palotsina* and *alim* wood, plastic strings, bottles.

Each material used was carefully cleaned, dried, diced, scrapped, soaked, glued, and cut to form intricately designed flower petals or buds, leaves, mosaic, coupled with flickering and sparkling lights to give birth to exquisite and unique Christmas lanterns.

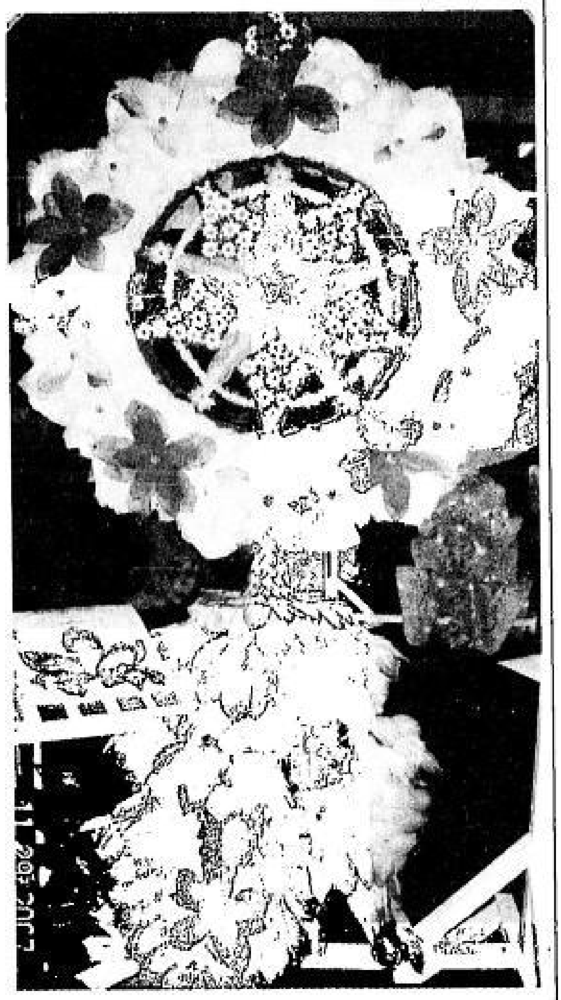
The BHS lanterns are a testament to the creativity and skill of the Filipino youth.

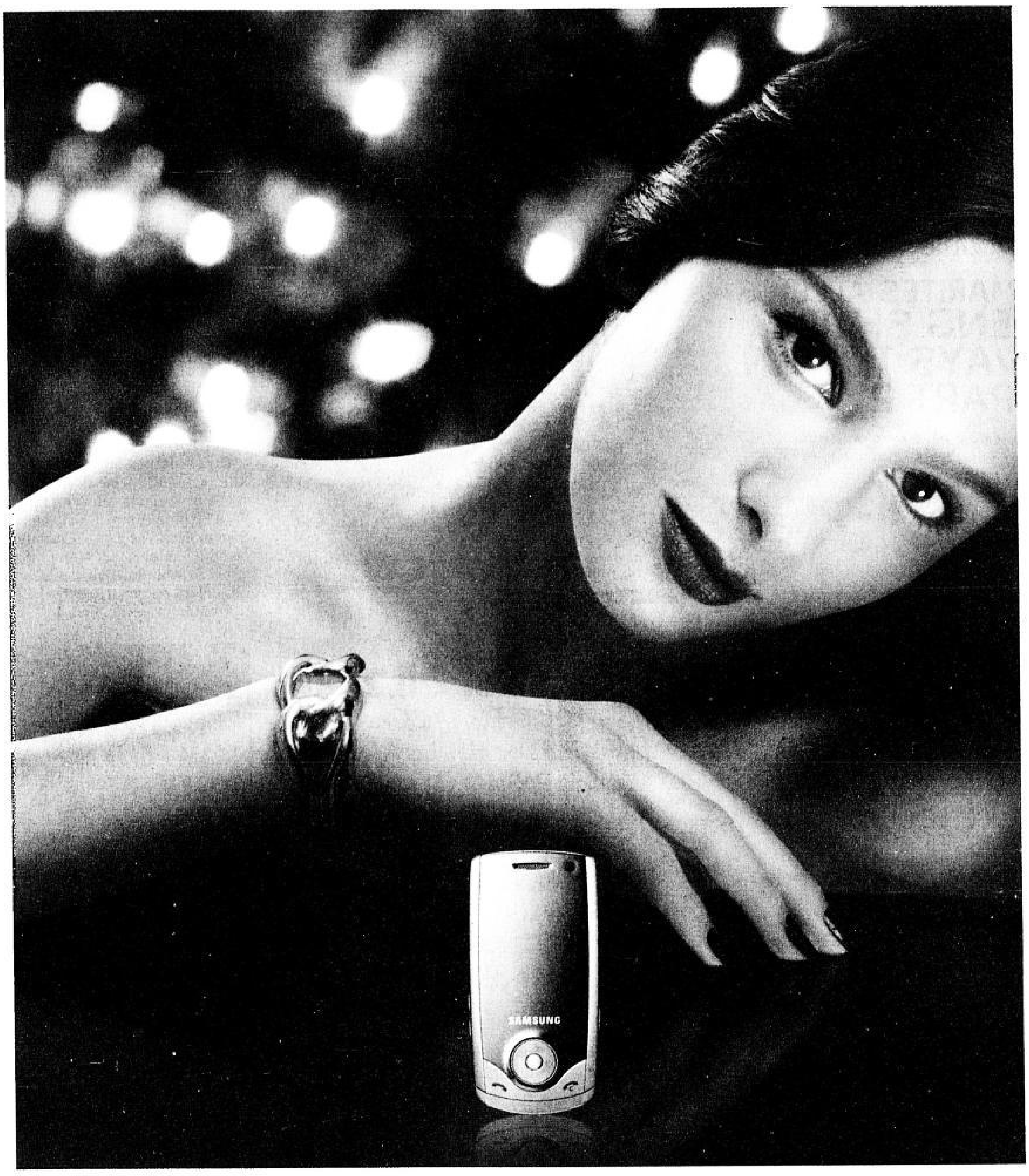
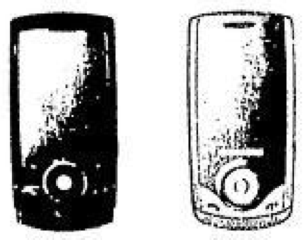
This year, 12 winning creations will be displayed at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Little Theater Lobby starting Dec. 18, during the Paskong Pinoy celebration at the CCP.

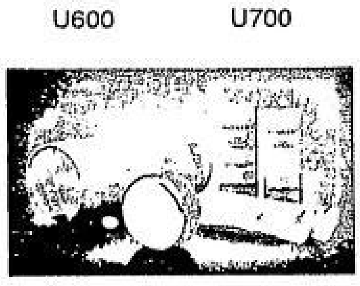
The top three lanterns crafted out of rice grains and hay, citrus fruits and garlic won the BHS Parol Festival this year.

Admission to the exhibit is free. For more information, call the CCP Visual Arts Division at 8321125 loc. 1504-1505.

THEY/E4


ALIBANGBANG **and** ***guyabano*** **leaves**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Grave new 'World'

By Ruel S. De Vera

AN ACTUAL BOOK OF revelations, in spirit and in structure, "The World Without Us" by Alan Weisman (Thomas Dunne Books, New York, 2007, 324 pages) illuminates a future that seems unthinkable but is anything but impossible: "Picture a world from which we all suddenly vanished. Tomorrow."

Noting that how that could happen is not as important as what comes after it comes to pass, Weisman uses science, sources and stylish prose to reveal what would happen to Planet Earth immediately after man goes missing.

First, feral flora and fauna get their revenge in an eerily silent place. Bereft of maintenance, buildings and all other architectural artifacts of man's time break down. Not all at once, though.

The book becomes time-lapse photography in paragraph form, but instead of manipulating mere days or months, "World" rearranges decades and even centuries.

Weisman orients his query in an imaginative fashion: If an alien archeologist arrived on earth at that point, what would it find?

"To imagine our big, overwhelming civilization really ending," Weisman writes, "is as hard for us as picturing the edge of the universe."

To find out what the world would be like after man, Weisman discusses in detail the world before man.

He plows through such fascinating questions and offering possible answers, discussing ideas daft, daring, disturbing and delightful. In the process, the planet begins to feel like a character in the book. Man versus wild, indeed, in a really big picture.

Challenging

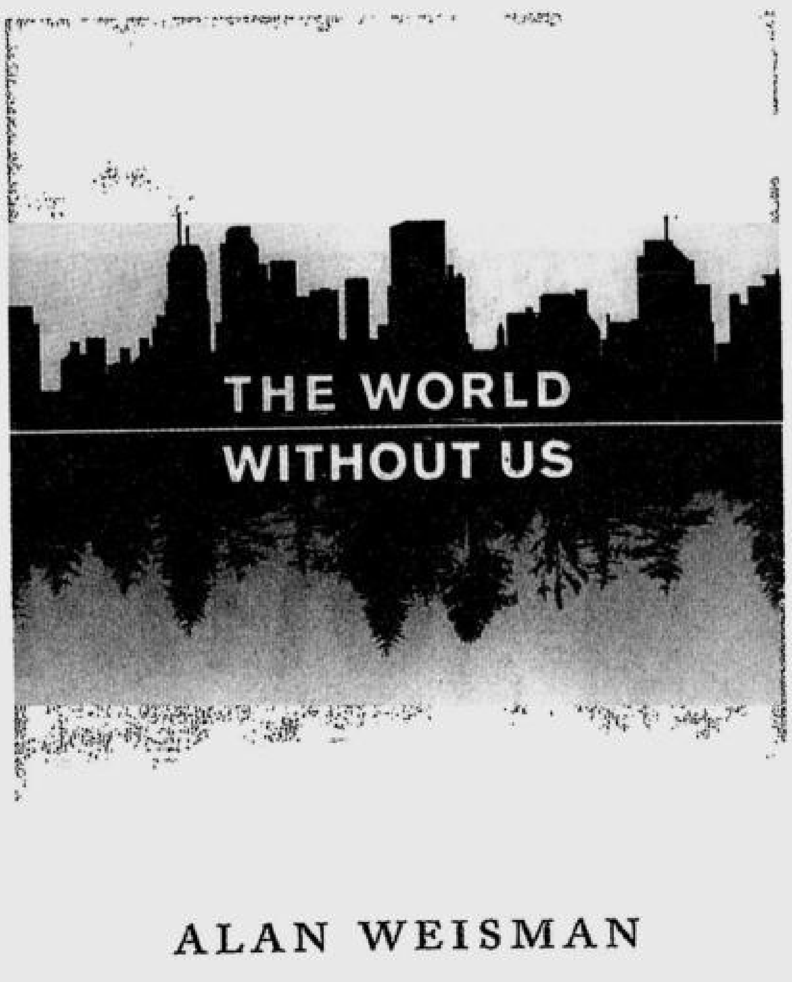
A very challenging book with commensurate rewards, "World" is packed with so much information that the reader will actually be forced to read at a rate so glacial it echoes the geologic time the book follows. With occasional forays into poetic territory, Weisman manages to explain scientific fact through intricate prose—a lot of it.

Entire hardwood forests would already have reemerged by the time readers dig through a chapter. Yet, even through the bramble of dense and evocative prose, arcane facts jump out: Newspapers do not automatically biodegrade, even how Mount Rushmore would survive for 7.2 million years.

If readers manage to overcome the limestone-thick narrative, they will hear Weisman explain how the very presence of Homo sapiens became a force of nature, changing the world irrevocably, hunting entire species into oblivion.

"When people got out of Africa and Asia and reached other parts of the world," Weisman quotes a scientist as saying, "all Hell broke loose."

Though never overtly pro-environment, Weisman grimly discusses how man is ruining the planet: "Plastic debris, [the scientist] believed, was now the most common feature of the world's oceans."



Weisman shows that man has messed around with almost every part of nature to a certain degree, and, in this case, a little goes a very long and tragic way. Perhaps the most frightening aspect of "World" is how the planet may actually be better off without the presence of today's dominant peak predator, man.

This is all speculation, but one backed by impeccable science minus the fiction. Even now, Weisman is predicting our way of life is a way of death for the planet.

'The World Without Us' is one of the most awe-inspiring and frightening books you will ever read—but it's not fiction

"If we change nothing from the way we do business today—much of what once lay frozen atop Greenland will be sloshing in a swollen Atlantic."

That, like much of what lies within Alan Weisman's "The World Without Us," is a solemn reminder that the consequences of man's actions, for good and certainly for ill, will live on long after we are all gone, changing what it touches, pervading it with the pinch of the perilous possible.

"The only real prediction you can make is that life will go on," another scientist concludes. "And that it will be interesting."

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Per DTI NCR Series No. 4385 of 2007. Promo period: Dec. 2, 2007 to Jan. 7, 2008.

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How whole-meat ham became a noble Christmas gift

CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham comes with an elegant gift box as modeled by Melanie Fabian.

Do you know that in medieval years, only kings, emperors and other royalties could get a taste of a carefully cured meat now known as whole meat ham?

Royalties feasted on succulent pork leg during feasts in celebration of victories over crucial battle or grand weddings of royal couples.

The pork leg came to be known as the main attraction during festivities, and commoners counted themselves lucky if they were able to join the celebration.

With the growth of the livestock industry in the western countries over the years, people have considered whole-meat ham as a special gift during grand occasions such as Christmas.

This tradition of gift giving was passed on from one generation to the next, and from one culture to another, until it reached the shores of the Philippines.

During the celebration of Christmas, the Philippines followed the western practice of having family gathering with whole meat ham as a main attraction on the dining table.

Filipinos also followed the tradition of giving whole meat ham during Christmas to show their appreciation for their loved ones and other special individuals.

Give your loved ones a noble present this Christmas – CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham. It is considered a premium type of ham, because of its whole meat structure, good looks, lean meat and savory taste.

CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham is a whole muscle ham and 100 percent derived from hamleg, in the tradition of the royalties. It is slowly smoked, fully cooked, simmered in special blends of herbs and glazed with pineapple jelly to bring out its luscious flavor. Hence, it is ready to eat.

It undergoes a ten-step process to provide that genuine taste of ham. There are no shortcuts to make a great tasting ham. After all, your loved ones deserve only the best ham.

Buyers, who are familiar with the different types of hams, look for whole-meat ham, which is considered superior over a restructured ham, both in terms of meat ingredient and process. That is why whole-meat ham is considered the premium type.

The CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham is the flagship Christmas ham product of the 32-year-old meat manufacturing company CDO-Foodsphere Inc. To sustain the good quality of CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, the company makes sure that all materials, ingredients, and processes used are in accordance with internationally recognized standards.

With Christmas just around the corner, make your loved ones feel special by giving them CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham. For more information about whole-meat hams, contact 294-111.

'Sherds,' new Sionil José novel, is off the press

THE UNIQUE TITLE OF NATIONAL ARTIST F. Sionil Jose's newest novel, as defined by the Websters Collegiate Dictionary, are fragments of pottery found in sites where pottery-making peoples have lived.

Its main character, belongs to the oligarchic family, the Golangcos. The first Golangco in F. Sionil José's sprawling gallery of literary characters appears in one of his early novels, "Gagamba."

The original Golangcos were two brothers who came to the Philippines in the 1850s from Fookien, China. The older brother settled in Binondo, learned Spanish and became the Governor-General's "tong" (protection money) collector in Manila's Chinese community.

F. SIONIL José

The younger Golangco settled in the Central Plains, traded in rice and became an *hacendero*.

PG (Peter Gregory) in this novel belongs to the fourth generation of this clan. He is completely detached from the family businesses. He is an artist, a potter and scholar, a sybarite and cosmopolite with a doctorate in aesthetics. He is a tenured professor at the University of California in Berkeley but elects to return to the Philippines to teach at the urging of another Filipino-Chinese, Betty Sy, a former student.

Into his seminar class, a freshman comes. She is tall, talented, combative. A tenacious teacher-pupil relationship starts, develops and culminates in an unexpected ending.

"Sherds" is, perhaps, Sionil Jose's most thoughtful and incisive comment on the Filipino condition. For all its sophisticated urban setting, it still belongs to the vernacular literary tradition, hewing closely to the author's major theme—the Filipino's often hopeless search for social justice and a moral order.

F. Sionil José's fiction is now translated into 28 languages. In 1980, he received the Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Award for Literature. In 2001, he was named National Artist for Literature, and in 2004, he received from the government of Chile the Pablo Neruda Centennial Award for Literature.

Ateneo de Manila wins TV debate

ATENEO DE MANILA University's debate team is set to compete in the World Universities Debating Championship (Worlds) this month.

It won the right to represent the country after beating Ateneo De Zamboanga University at in the finals of the Philippine Debate Championship aired on ANC's "Square Off."

In the finals, winning Atenean debaters Sharmilah Parmanand and Charisse Borromeo argued that allowing media to air news on terrorism would only elevate the terrorists' status.

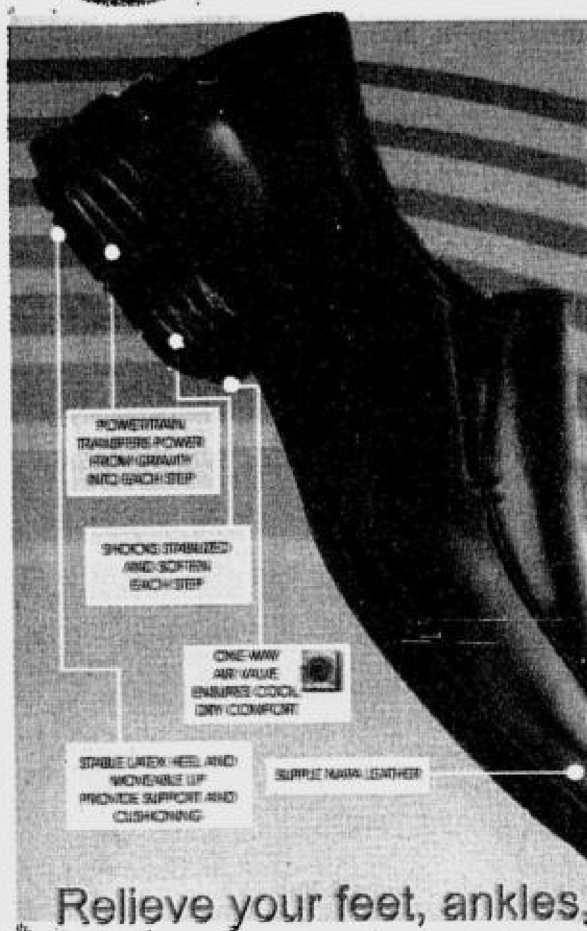
But Al Zhoheir Hajim and Henry Segovia of Ateneo Davao argued that the media reports were needed so that the public would know the "enemy."

Despite a well-thought-of rebuttal by the opposition, adjudicators sided with ADMU in the end because of clear and precise presentation of arguments and a better grasp of language.

ADMU won P20,000 in cash, trophies, and will become one of the country's representatives to the World Universities Debating Championship on Dec. 27-Jan, 5, 2008 in Thailand. Ateneo would be sponsored by the Philippine Graphic.

Aside from Graphic, sponsors include the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation, Philippine Stock Exchange, Megaworld, Thai Airways, Chowking, Victory Liner, SGV Foundation, and Fernandina.

GRAVITY DEFYER
ADVANCE TECHNOLOGY IN FOOTWEAR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FESTIVE SEASON

Celebrate the Festive Season at Cebu City's finest

In Cebu, the most magical place to be in this Festive Season is the Marco Polo Plaza. Celebrate the Festive Season at Cebu City's finest!

CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

Christmas Carols in the Lobby, 16-23 December, 6:00 PM
The angelic voices of various choirs fill the atrium with classic Christmas carols.

Christmas Eve Dinner, 24 December, 7:00 PM
Your choice of venue for a festive Christmas buffet dinner.
Whether it's at Café Marco, El Viento or the Grand Ballroom, you and your family will delight in the sumptuous cuisine Marco Polo Plaza is famous for. Dynamic Latin band Caliente performs at El Viento while Interact plays retro music at the Ballroom. All buffet dinners at Php1,108.00 nett/person.

Christmas Eve Mass, Grand Balcony, 24 December, 10:00 PM
Midnight Mass under the stars. Featuring a live re-enactment of the Nativity scene. Also featuring the Metrobank Cebu Choir.

Noche Buena, Café Marco, 24 December, 11:30 PM
The traditional way of celebrating Christmas Eve with a Filipino style merienda buffet. Php370.00 nett/person.

Christmas Day Brunch, Café Marco, 25 December, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Wake up late on Christmas Day and let Café Marco treat you and your family to all the holiday culinary delights you've been dreaming of. Php1,108.00 nett/person.

NEW YEAR'S COUNTDOWN

Revelry on 31 December starts at 7:30 PM
It's all happening at the Marco Polo Plaza Cebu on New Year's Eve! Welcome 2008 with a delightful **buffet dinner** anywhere at the hotel and enjoy complimentary entrance to the Grand Balcony for the New Year's Countdown and spectacular fireworks display.

Café Marco and **El Viento**, Php 1,188.00 nett/person.

Garden Terrace, Featuring the Caliente Band. Php 1,588.00 nett/person.

Grand Ballroom, International artist Anna Fegi entertains over dinner, followed by the versatile Flintstones & The Gang for all-night dancing. Php 2,008.00 nett/person.

Grand Balcony, Entertainment starts at 11:00 PM by the Soul Mafia, with countdown, fireworks and all-night dancing under the stars. Php 588.00 nett/person for walk-ins. Includes glass of sparkling wine.

Purchase 10 New Year's Eve dinner tickets and get one (1) free! Offer valid only for Garden Terrace and Grand Ballroom buffet dinners.

New Year's Day Brunch, Café Marco, 1 January 2008, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Start the year with a festive brunch at Café Marco.
Php 1,108.00 nett/person.

FESTIVE SEASON ROOM PACKAGES

Enjoy family togetherness this Festive Season with special room rates from December 23, 2007 to January 2, 2008 for local residents starting at only Php3,800.00 nett per night, inclusive of breakfast. Those staying for two nights or longer get fabulous discounts.

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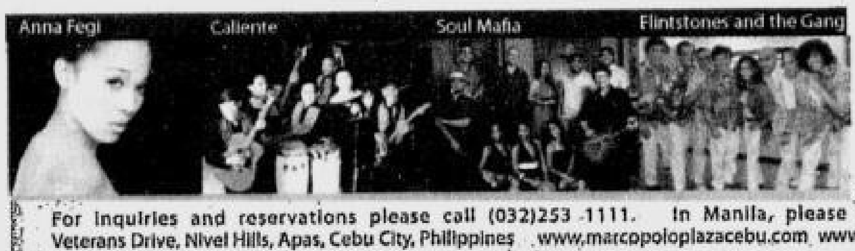

For inquiries and reservations please call (032)253 1111. In Manila, please call (02) 845 4574.
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How far can your AIG Credit Card take you?

Celebrate the holidays and enjoy special treats when you use your AIG Credit Card.

Burgoo
FREE
Burgoo Kebabs
For a minimum order of any entree with the same or higher value
Valid until December 31, 2007
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2915, Series of 2007

GUMBO
FREE
Grilled Chicken Limone
For a minimum order of any entree with the same or higher value
Valid until December 31, 2007
Per DTI-NCR Permit N . 2915, Series of 2007

Gerry's GRILL
FREE Sisig
For a minimum purchase of Php750
or
FREE Leche Flan
For 2 for a minimum purchase of Php500
Valid until January 31, 2008
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5352, Series of 2007

TENDER BOB'S
FREE Rocky Road or Cookies & Cream or Mango Caramel Ice Cream
For a minimum purchase of Php750
- Choice of either one of three flavors

Valid until February 15, 2008
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5376, Series of 2007

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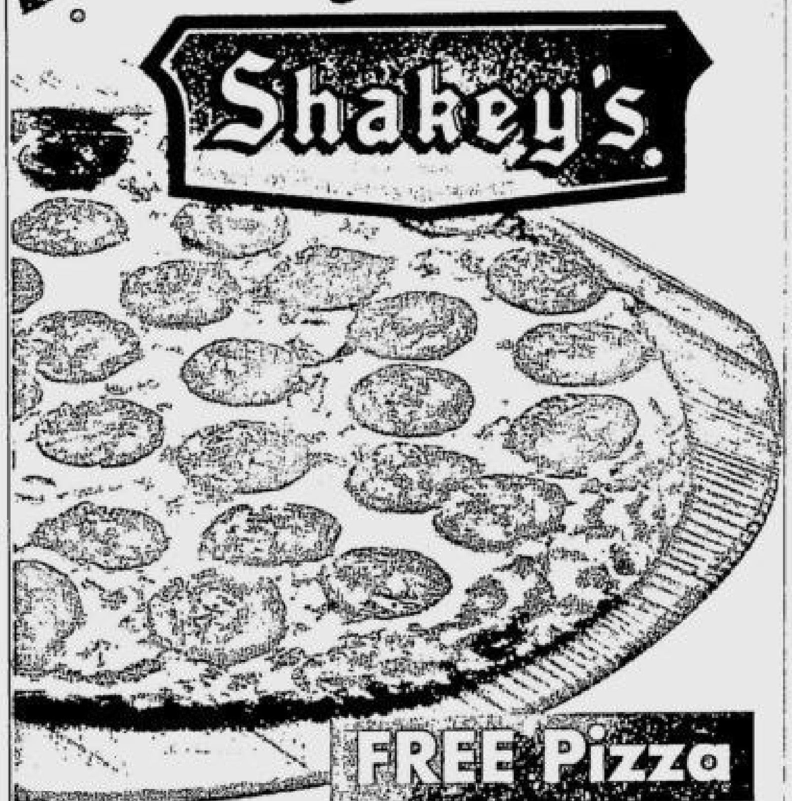
Shakey's



FREE Pizza
Upon purchase of either Large or Party, Thin or Thick Crust Pizza and a Pitcher of Iced Tea or Lemonade
- Free pizza is of the same size and crust of pizza purchase
- Choice of Hawaiian Delight or Pepperoni

Valid until December 31, 2007
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4272, Series of 2007

Call 683-8888 for details.

See tent cards for details.

AIG PhilAm

They light up our life

From page E1

GARLIC

FISH-scales

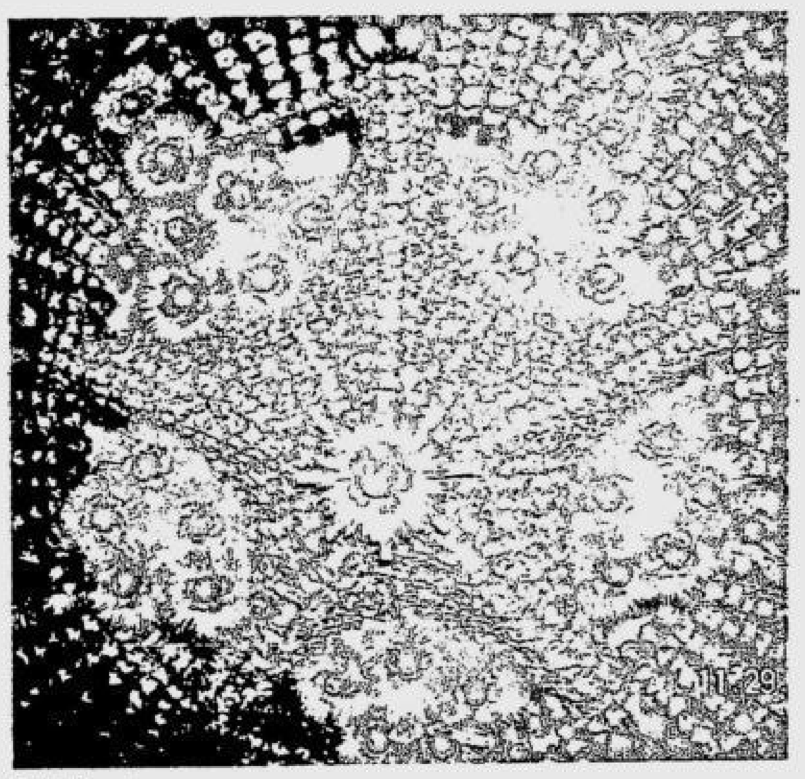
Traffic advisory

For the opening of Paskong Pinoy on Dec. 18, the public is advised that the entrance to the CCP Complex will be rerouted from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. Entrance to the CCP Complex via Roxas Boulevard will be through Vicente Sotto Street (fronting the electronic billboard). Exit from the CCP Complex to Roxas Boulevard will be through Pedro Bukaneg Street.

Guests and patrons of the CCP are requested to plan their trips earlier to avoid coming late.

The public is also invited to the other Paskong Pinoy activities. Aside from the ceremonial lighting of the Bauan *parol* creations, activities include: Sopas, Sining at Sorbetes (CCP's annual feeding and arts appreciation program) at 2 p.m.; and "Panunuluyan" at 4 p.m.; plus choral and lantern-float competitions and Pinoy rock concerts.

DALANDAN **and *kalamansi***



BETEL nuts

NOTICE TO MAYNILAD WATER CUSTOMERS AND THE PUBLIC

NEW WATER RATES FOR THE WEST ZONE

Effective 1 January 2008, Maynilad Water Services, Inc. will implement a tariff adjustment to cover the **2.6% Consumer Price Index** and Special Transitory Mechanism (STM), which is **-8.99%** of the basic charge as recommended by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Regulatory Office No. 07-026-CA dated 12 December 2007 and confirmed by the MWSS Board Resolution No. 2007-275 dated 14 December 2007. Also included, is a downward adjustment in the Foreign Currency Differential Adjustment (FCDA), which is **-1.85%** of the basic charge. This percentage may increase or decrease quarterly depending on the fluctuation of the foreign exchange rates.

The **MWSI** presently serves the West Zone which consists of the following areas: The cities of **Manila** (all but portions of San Andre & Sta. Ana), Quezon City (west of San Juan River, West Ave., EDSA, Congressional & Mindanao Ave..; the northern part starting from Districts of the Holy Spirit & Batasan Hills), **Makati**,(west of South Super Hi-way), **Caloocan, Pasay, Paranaque, Las Pinas, and Valenzuela**, and the towns of **Navotas and Malabon** - all in **Metro Manila**; **Cavite City**, towns of Bacoor, Imus, Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario - all in **Cavite** province.

The new schedule of water tariff for all MWSI customers effective January 1, 2008 is as follows:

1. WATER CHARGES			**Effective Until Dec. 31, 2007**	**Effective on Jan. 1, 2008**				**Effective Until Dec. 31, 2007**	**Effective on Jan. 1, 2008**
A. BASIC CHARGE									
RESIDENTIAL					**SEMI-BUSINESS**				
First	10	cu.m.	₱ 75.65 /conn.	₱ 77.62 /conn.	First	10	cu.m.	₱ 127.08 /conn.	₱ 130.38 /conn.
Next	10	cu.m.	9.24 /cu.m.	9.48 /cu.m.	Next	10	cu.m.	15.51 /cu.m.	15.91 /cu.m.
Next	20	cu.m.	17.56 /cu.m.	18.02 /cu.m.	Next	20	cu.m.	19.11 /cu.m.	19.61 /cu.m.
Next	20	cu.m.	23.07 /cu.m.	23.67 /cu.m.	Next	20	cu.m.	24.23 /cu.m.	24.86 /cu.m.
Next	20	cu.m.	26.95 /cu.m.	27.65 /cu.m.	Next	20	cu.m.	28.17 /cu.m.	28.90 /cu.m.
Next	20	cu.m.	28.17 /cu.m.	28.90 /cu.m.	Next	20	cu.m.	29.49 /cu.m.	30.26 /cu.m.
Next	50	cu.m.	29.46 /cu.m.	30.23 /cu.m.	Next	50	cu.m.	30.78 /cu.m.	31.58 /cu.m.
Next	50	cu.m.	30.78 /cu.m.	31.58 /cu.m.	Next	50	cu.m.	32.08 /cu.m.	32.91 /cu.m.
Over	200	cu.m.	32.08 /cu.m.	32.91 /cu.m.	Over	200	cu.m.	33.35 /cu.m.	34.22 /cu.m.
BUSINESS GROUP I					**BUSINESS GROUP II**				
First	10	cu.m.	₱ 343.82 /conn.	₱ 352.76 /conn.	First	10	cu.m.	₱ 372.04 /conn.	₱ 381.71 /conn.
Next	90	cu.m.	34.54 /cu.m.	35.44 /cu.m.	Next	90	cu.m.	37.44 /cu.m.	38.41 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	34.64 /cu.m.	35.54 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	37.68 /cu.m.	38.66 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	34.74 /cu.m.	35.64 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	37.96 /cu.m.	38.95 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	34.86 /cu.m.	35.77 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	38.23 /cu.m.	39.22 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	34.97 /cu.m.	35.88 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	38.48 /cu.m.	39.48 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	35.15 /cu.m.	36.06 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	38.74 /cu.m.	39.75 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	35.29 /cu.m.	36.21 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	39.00 /cu.m.	40.01 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	35.40 /cu.m.	36.32 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	39.23 /cu.m.	40.25 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	35.53 /cu.m.	36.45 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	39.51 /cu.m.	40.54 /cu.m.
Next	100	cu.m.	35.62 /cu.m.	36.55 /cu.m.	Next	100	cu.m.	39.75 /cu.m.	40.78 /cu.m.
Next	200	cu.m.	35.80 /cu.m.	36.73 /cu.m.	Next	200	cu.m.	40.01 /cu.m.	41.05 /cu.m.
Next	200	cu.m.	35.91 /cu.m.	36.84 /cu.m.	Next	200	cu.m.	40.25 /cu.m.	41.30 /cu.m.
Next	200	cu.m.	36.07 /cu.m.	37.01 /cu.m.	Next	200	cu.m.	40.55 /cu.m.	41.60 /cu.m.
Next	200	cu.m.	36.18 /cu.m.	37.12 /cu.m.	Next	200	cu.m.	40.76 /cu.m.	41.82 /cu.m.
Next	200	cu.m.	36.28 /cu.m.	37.22 /cu.m.	Next	200	cu.m.	41.04 /cu.m.	42.11 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	36.38 /cu.m.	37.33 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	41.30 /cu.m.	42.37 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	36.58 /cu.m.	37.53 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	41.53 /cu.m.	42.61 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	36.70 /cu.m.	37.65 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	41.78 /cu.m.	42.87 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	36.83 /cu.m.	37.79 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	42.08 /cu.m.	43.17 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	36.89 /cu.m.	37.85 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	42.30 /cu.m.	43.40 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.05 /cu.m.	38.01 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	42.59 /cu.m.	43.70 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.21 /cu.m.	38.18 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	42.83 /cu.m.	43.94 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.30 /cu.m.	38.27 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	43.06 /cu.m.	44.18 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.44 /cu.m.	38.41 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	43.34 /cu.m.	44.47 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.58 /cu.m.	38.56 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	43.62 /cu.m.	44.75 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.68 /cu.m.	38.66 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	43.84 /cu.m.	44.98 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.83 /cu.m.	38.81 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	44.15 /cu.m.	45.30 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	37.96 /cu.m.	38.95 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	44.36 /cu.m.	45.51 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	38.09 /cu.m.	39.08 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	44.65 /cu.m.	45.81 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	38.23 /cu.m.	39.22 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	44.88 /cu.m.	46.05 /cu.m.
Next	500	cu.m.	38.34 /cu.m.	39.34 /cu.m.	Next	500	cu.m.	45.16 /cu.m.	46.33 /cu.m.
Over	10000	cu.m.	38.48 /cu.m.	39.48 /cu.m.	Over	10000	cu.m.	45.39 /cu.m.	46.57 /cu.m.

B. CERA - P1.00 per m3 of water consumption

C. Foreign Currency Differential Adjustment (FCDA) - a percentage of the basic charge subject to quarterly review and adjustment

D. Special Transitory Mechanism (STM) -8.99 % of the basic charge based on the court-approved 2005 Revised Rehabilitation Plan dated 20 April 2005 and the DCRA.

2. A. ENVIRONMENTAL CHARGE (EC) - 10% of Water Charge

B. SEWERAGE CHARGE (SC) - 50% of Water Charge
For all customers connected to MWSI sewerlines

3. MAINTENANCE SERVICE CHARGE (MSC)

METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)
1/2" or 13mm	₱ 1.50	1 1/4" or 40mm	4.00	4" or 50mm	20.00
3/4" or 20mm	2.00	2" or 50mm	6.00	6" or 150mm	35.00
1" or 25mm	3.00	3" or 75mm	10.00	8" or 200mm	50.00

4. VALUE-ADDED TAX (VAT) 12% of the Charges 1, 2 and 3

THE MONTHLY BILL IS THE SUM OF 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Approved by:

ALBERTO C. AGRA
OIC, MWSS-Regulatory Office

LORENZO H. JAMORA
Administrator, MWSS

ROGELIO L. SINGSON
President, MWSI

MAYNILAD WATER **MWSS**

NEW ALL -IN TARIFF EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2008

The Maynilad Water all-in average tariff effective January 1, 2008 was reduced from Php 32.96 per cubic meter to Php 31.66 or net decrease of Php 1.30 per cubic meter.

NOTICE TO SEA TRANSPORT CUSTOMERS

The Sea Transport Rate (STR) adjustment has been approved by the MWSS BOT under Resolution No. 2007-275 under a two-tiered scheme as follows:

	Effectivity Dates	
	January 1, 2008	July 1, 2008
STR per cubic meter (all-in)	Php 42.59	Php 78.03

The FCDA component in the all-in tariff shall be subject to quarterly review and adjustment.

The subsequent adjustments of the STR shall be based on the Rate Adjustment Limit (RAL) of the Standard Rates including foreign exchange adjustments per Amendment No.1 of the Concession Agreement.

The STR applies to water sold directly to ships and other sea transports.

UST holds traditional Paskuhan

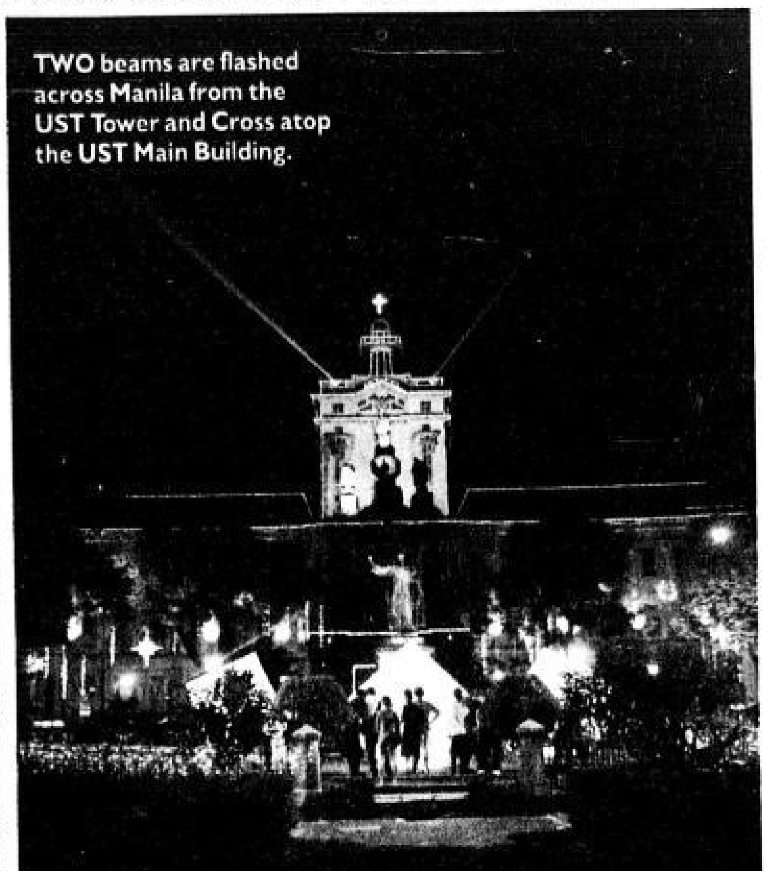
THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS will hold Paskuhan 2007 with the theme "Bagong Pananaw: Pasko!" on Dec. 19, at the UST Grandstand.

Paskuhan is the traditional Christmas celebration of the Pontifical University. It starts at 4 p.m. with the parade of students to the UST Grandstand, followed by the Panunuluyan, which depicts Mary and Joseph's search for an inn on Christmas night.

At 5:30 p.m., a High Mass will be celebrated by the Dominican community led by UST Rector Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa, OP.

The offertory collection will go to the community outreach projects of the UST Office of Community Development. The Mass will be followed by the lighting of the giant Christmas tree and the traditional fireworks display.

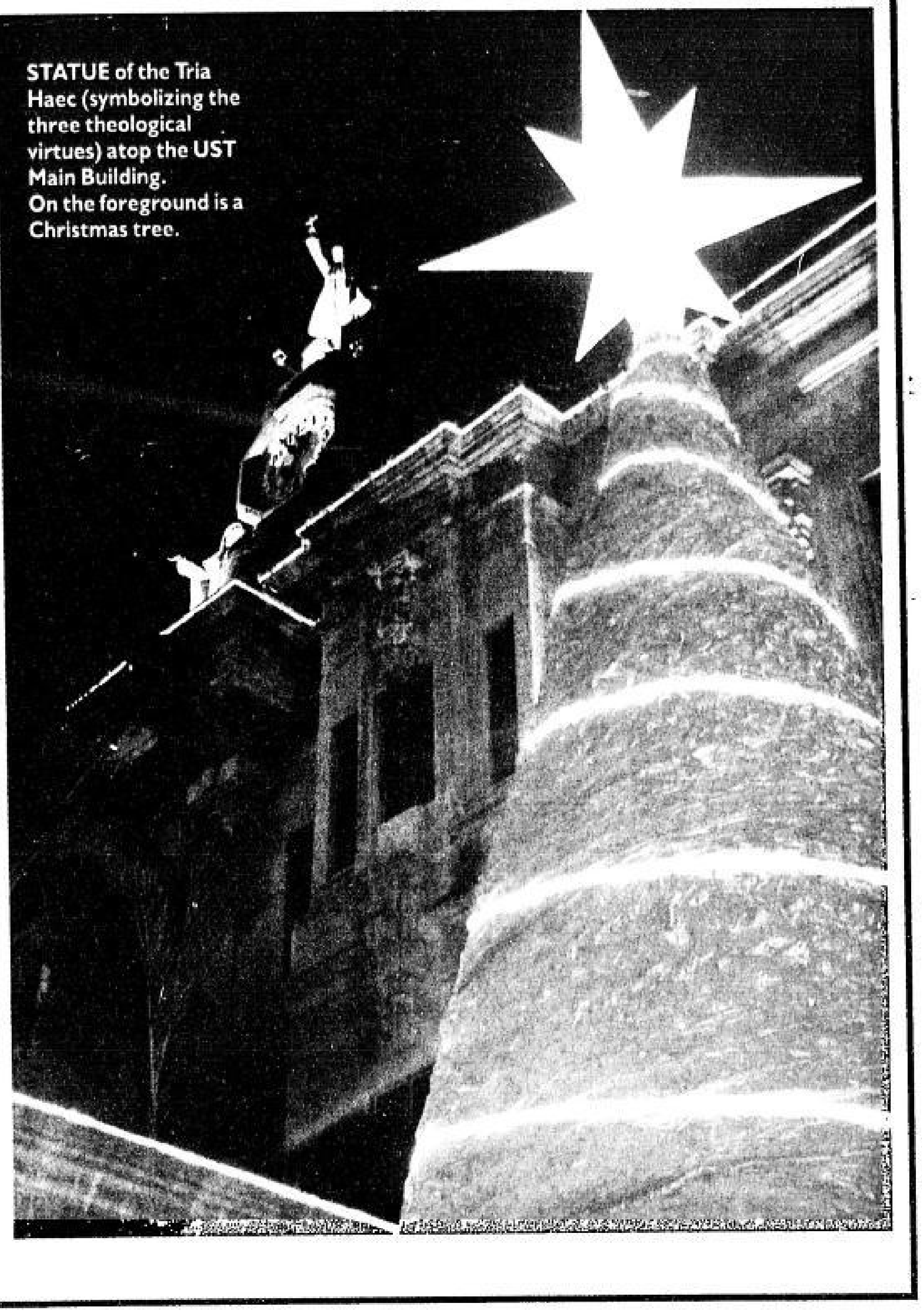
More than 100 prizes will be raffled off.



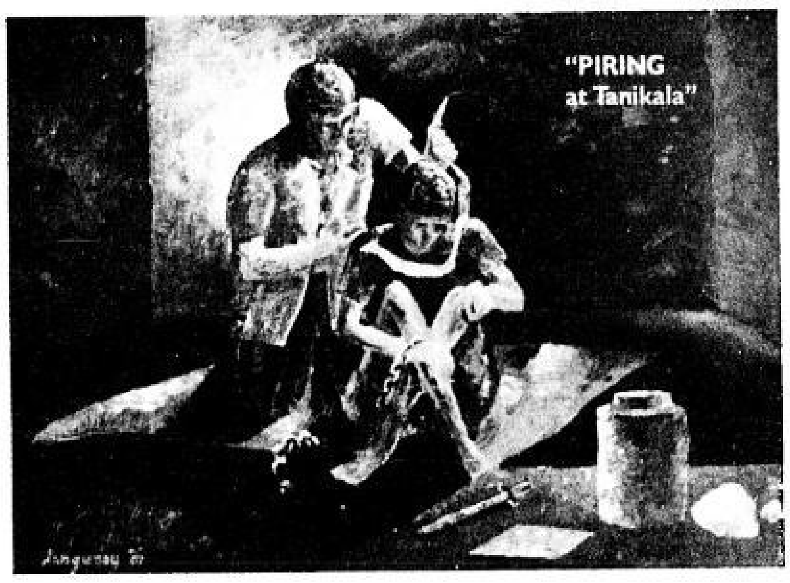
TWO beams are flashed across Manila from the UST Tower and Cross atop the UST Main Building.

THE FOOT of the Arch of the Centuries, the gate of the old UST in Intramuros, is adorned with Christmas lanterns designed along the line of the Dominican cross.

THE STATUE of UST founder, Archbishop Miguel de Benavides, is surrounded by geometric cubes as lanterns.



STATUE of the Tria Haec (symbolizing the three theological virtues) atop the UST Main Building. On the foreground is a Christmas tree.



"PIRING at Tanikala"

Artworks empathize with diabetics' sufferings

DOCTORS OF THE PHILIPPINE Diabetes Association (PDA) participated in a unique art competition—one that produced sketches/drawings, paintings and photography which empathized with the sufferings and portrayed the emotional journey of Type 2 diabetes patients.

The Designs on Diabetes National Art Competition was organized by the PDA in partnership with pharmaceutical firm GlaxoSmithKline.

Diabetes is a silent killer that kills one person every 10 seconds. The reported death from diabetes-related causes has reached 3.8 million. The disease also accounts for over a million amputations annually.

A distinguished panel of judges chose nine artworks from a formidable field of entries. The winning artworks were exhibited during the 2007 PDA Annual Convention themed "Greater Heights in Diabetes Care" at the Century Park Hotel in Manila.

The doctors who created the artworks were recognized in a ceremony led by PDA president Dr. Tommy Ty Willing; GSK business unit director Andy Abarquez; and GSK-Avandia product manager Sheryl Pascual.

Two of the winning entries were titled "Piring at Tanikala" by Dr. Sangumay Anulacion, and "Torment of Diabetes" by Dr. Allan Hernandez. The artworks portray the sufferings of Type 2 diabetes patients.

Anulacion explained poverty played a major role in the unabated growth incidence of diabetes.

"People take diabetes with lesser concern and interest because poverty had prevented a great number of diabetic patients from seeking proper medical attention. Many diabetics suffer in silence and keep their frustrations to themselves to avoid the financial and emotional burden that it will bring to their family."

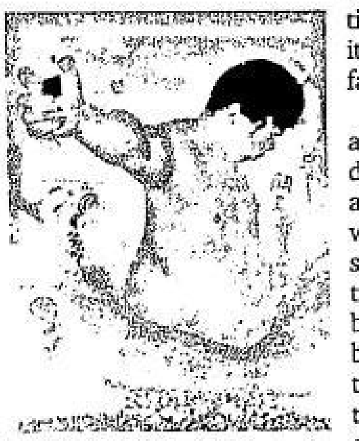
Referring to his artwork, Hernandez explained a diabetic patient's life was a constant struggle to maintain the balance between good blood sugar control and preventing the risk of complications.

"These things weigh heavily on patients and their families in all aspects of their lives—emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually."

"To be diagnosed with the disease means a lifetime spent taking medications. It also means having your blood examined for sugar regularly."

The rest of the winning artworks are "In the Depth of Uncertainty" by Dr. Ceferino Rene Villareal; "Different Sides" by Dr. Danilo Baldemor; "Creeping Death" by Dr. Emmanuel Ruiz II; "Realizing a Diabetic's Dream" by Dr. Vanessa Conti; "Solitude" by Dr. Josierina Sarmiento; "Should Have Used the Stairs" by Dr. Werner Irmscher; and "Facets and Phases" by Dr. Marcelyn Vitug.

The winning artworks are featured in the 2008 PDA calendar.



"TORMENT of Diabetes"

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE FUJITSU

Fujitsu recommends Windows Vista® Home Premium.
LifeBook P7230 is powered by Intel® Centrino® Duo processor technology.

connectivity
CONNECTIVITY
BLUETOOTH

LifeBook U1010

- Intel® Processor A110 (800MHz, 512KB L2 cache, 400MHz FSB)
- Genuine Windows Vista® Home Premium
- 5.6" SuperFine WSVGA, 1024 x 600 pixels, Passive Touch Panel
- 1GB DDR2 400MHz
- 40GB HDD
- 0.3 Mega Pixel Built-in Camera
- Bluetooth® v2.0
- Up to 3.0hrs (2-cell Li-ion 2600mAh)
- Approx. 0.61kg
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LifeBook P1610

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DID YOU KNOW...

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

CLEVELAND—MADONNA WAS ANnounced as a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee on Thursday, along with John Mellencamp, The Ventures, Leonard Cohen and The Dave Clark Five. A panel of 600 industry figures selected the five acts to be inducted at the annual rites, set March 10 in New York. *AP*

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METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2007

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2008.)

"Enteng Kabisote 4: Okay Ka, Fairy Ko (The Beginning of a Legend)"

M-Zet Productions/OctoArts Films
Stars: **Vic Sotto, Kristine Hermosa, G Tongi, Oyo Sotto, Aiza Seguerra, Jose Manalo, Ruby Rodriguez, Ian Veneracion, Francine Prieto, Michael de Mesa, Caridad Sanchez and Joey de Leon**
Directed by Tony R. Reyes

We have followed the life of the kind-hearted and funny mortal named Enteng and his wife Faye—a fairy from the magical world of Engkantasya—and joined them in their adventures battling the evil Santana. This year, audiences will be watching a prequel to the first three "Enteng" movies. "This will help young viewers, who did not see the sitcom on TV in the '90s, understand the characters more," said lead actor Sotto.

ABS-CBN lists affected shows

By Marinel R. Cruz

ABS-CBN'S PRIME TIME SHOWS—THE early evening newscast "TV Patrol," the drama series "Walang Kapalit" and *fantaserye* "Kokey" have been particularly disadvantaged by "manipulated" TV ratings, according to a network executive.

The network on Wednesday filed a P63-million civil case against the survey firm AGB Nielsen for alleged rigging of ratings poll results.

Corporate Communications head Bong Osorio told INQUIRER Entertainment, however, that there has been no significant decrease in the ratings of the said shows, even in Bacolod where the reported cheating happened. "We are still the national leader," said Osorio. "But the gap [in viewership between ABS-CBN and closest rival GMA 7] would be wider if not for this."

Osorio related that on Nov. 20, the ABS-CBN station manager in Bacolod was sought out by a man who divulged attempts to "unnaturally influence" households where Nielsen had set up survey meters.

Credible

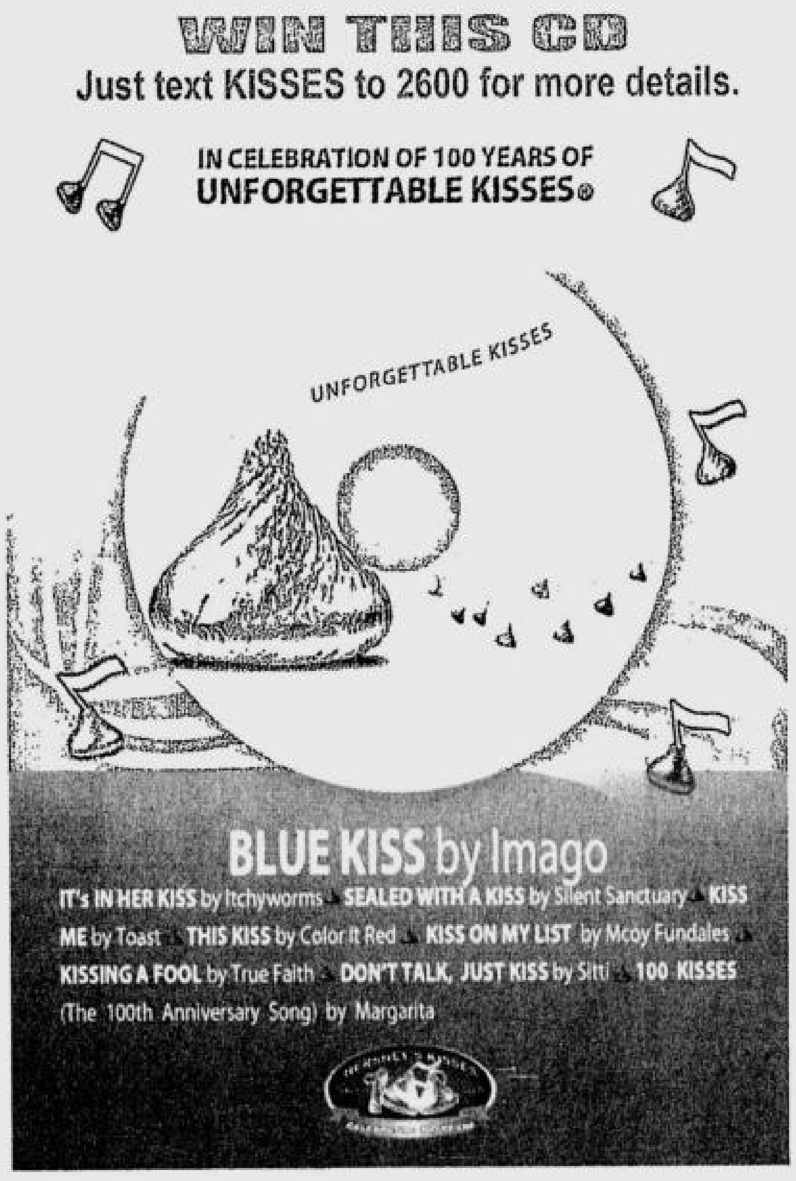
"We don't know why the informant [did that]. But he sounded credible and signed an affidavit," said Osorio, refusing to reveal the man's identity or affiliation.

Nielsen ignored a letter that ABS-CBN sent two weeks ago about the matter, added Osorio. "We asked what they intended to do," he said. "[Their response] presented no concrete course of action. So we went to court."

The Kapamilya network might conduct its own probe, Osorio said. "It could be happening nationwide."

Inevitably, the Kapamilya exec pointed out, this incident would diminish Nielsen's integrity as the industry's main ratings provider. "They have to shape up. If this is happening to the TV industry, it could happen to radio and print."

To observations that the "tampered" results seemed to favor rival network GMA 7, Osorio said: "The case is not against the other network but against AGB Nielsen."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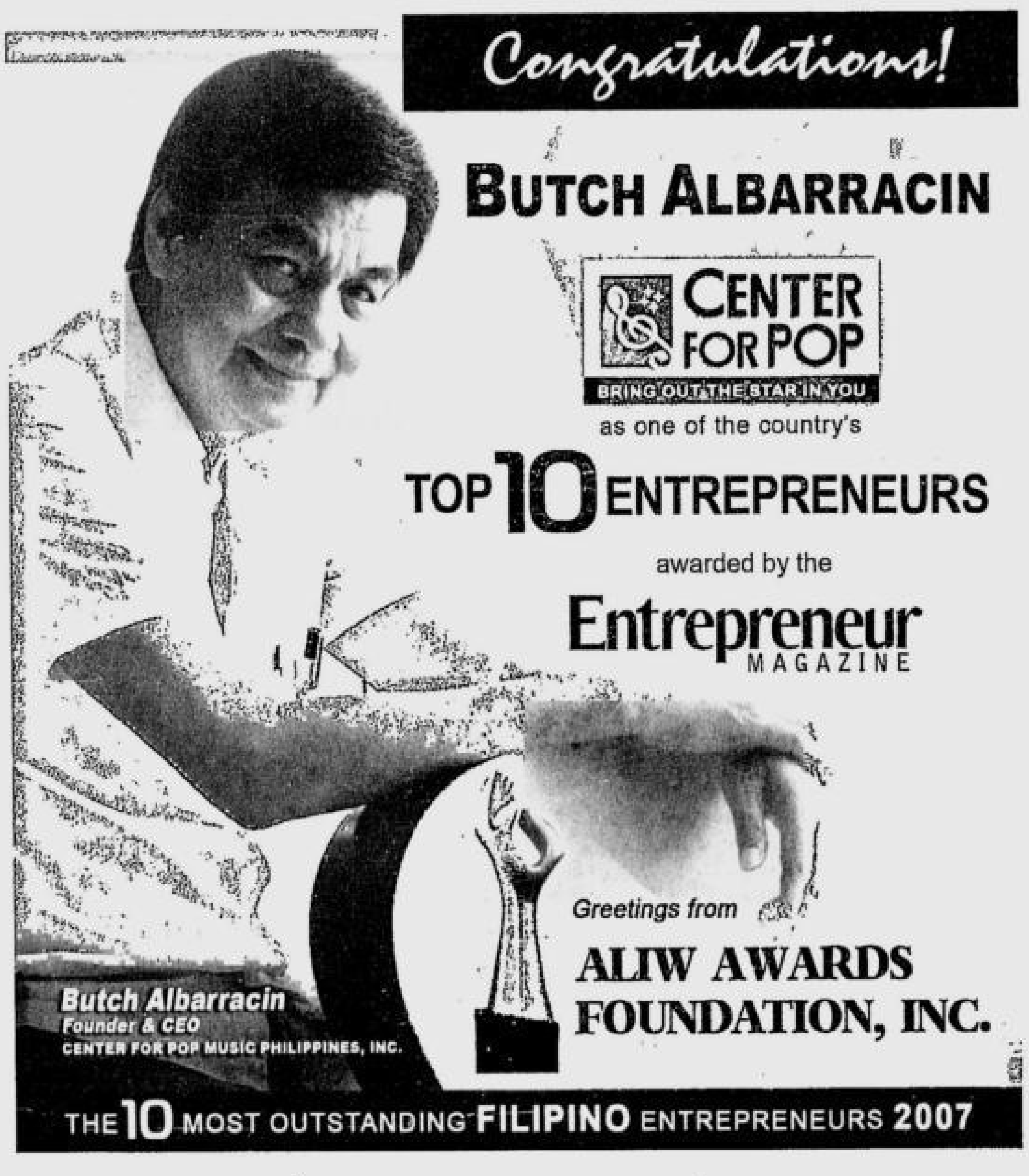
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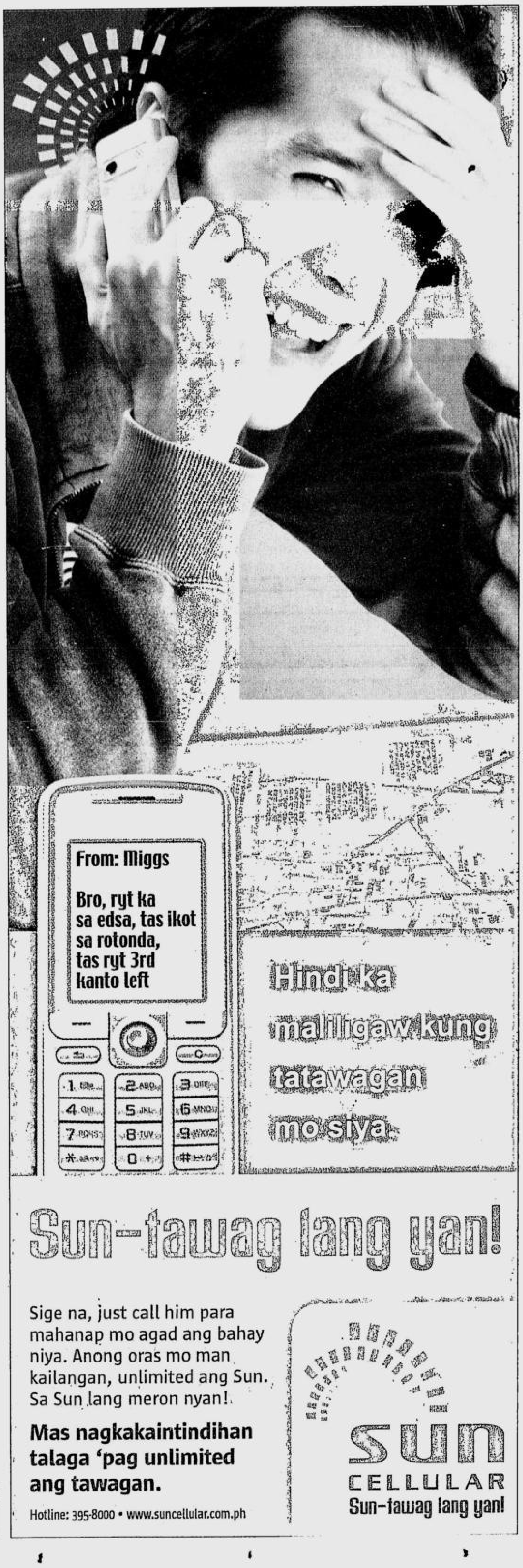
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Revilla: Digital tech can help stop piracy

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—DIGITAL TECHnology has made film piracy a little harder to stop but the same technology has made producing films cheaper and can help bring down the cost of commercial entertainment, Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. said here.

Revilla, whose family owns Imus Productions, said local movies and music albums are sometimes digitized and transmitted to film pirates through the Internet, making it difficult for law enforcers to trace sources.

But Philippine producers have also discovered that digital technology helped cut the usual costs of producing movies, noted Revilla, a former chair of the Videogram Regulatory Board.

He said the government should help the industry access these forms of technology to make digital filmmaking more competitive, and help the mainstream producers make more affordable movies.

Revilla on Friday led the kick-off parade here of the Metro Manila Film Festival.

He said his entry, the science fiction film "Resiklo," already uses high definition (HD) digital technology at far lower costs than previous years.

But moviegoers have not fully embraced small digital productions, he said. "Maybe these are not glossy enough for them."

SHOW TIME

ON SATURDAY, Dec. 22, the all-tenor group Angelos (above) performs in a special back-to-back show with the retro band Spirit of '67 (top) at Makati Shangri-La's Conway's Bar. Call 0910-3233734.

JINGLE BALL Three hot teen stars (clockwise from right)—American Idol Jordin Sparks, actress Hayden Panettiere and rock star Avril Lavigne—make sparks fly during the Z100 Jingle Ball 2007 Christmas concert at Madison Square Garden, New York, on Friday. AP

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 ELIZABETH MTRCB. PG-13 1:00, 3:50, 6:40, 9:30	3 GOLDEN COMPASS MTRCB: PG-13 1:30, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30
2 ELIZABETH MTRCB. PG-13 12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00	4 THE KINGDOM MTRCB GP 2:00, 9:30 DEATH PROOF MTRCB R-13 4:40, 7:05
PREMIERE THEATRE	ENCHANTED MTRCB R-13 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30

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Cinema	Film	Times	Rating
1	CATACOMBS	11:00 , 1:20 , 3:40 6:00 , 8:20 , 10:35	R-13
2	THE KINGDOM	11:00 , 1:20 , 3:40 6:00 , 8:20 , 10:35	R-13

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NOW SHOWING

Cinema	Film	Times	Rating
3	DEATHPROOF	11:50 , 2:05 , 4:20 6:35 , 8:50	R-13
4	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	11:15 , 2:00 , 4:40 7:20 , 10:00	PG-13
5	ELIZABETH	11:15 , 2:10 , 5:00 7:50 , 10:35	PG - 13

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MUSIC MUSEUM

December 15, 2007	The Company	8:00 PM
December 19, 2007	Pilita Corales , Dulce , Malu Barry	8:30 PM
December 28 , 2007	Pooh	8:00 PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

December 20, 2007	Jed Madela	8:00 PM
December 28 & 29 , 2007	Drag - Ons	10:00 PM

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Mall	Cinema	Film
GLORIETTA 1	1	CATACOMB
	2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS
	3	HOOD OF HORROR
	4	HITMAN
GLORIETTA 4	1	ENCHANTED
	2	THE KINGDOM
	3 THX	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	GONE BABY GONE
	5	BATANES
	6	THE GOLDEN COMPASS
	7	DEATH PROOF
GREENBELT 1	1	PAPER DOLLS
	2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS
GREENBELT 3	1 THX	THE GOLDEN COMPASS GUARANTEED SEATS
	2 THX	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS
	3	DEATH PROOF GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	GONE BABY GONE GUARANTEED SEATS
	5	EASTERN PROMISES GUARANTEED SEATS
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX	THE GOLDEN COMPASS
	2	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN COMPASS
	3	DEATH PROOF
	4	CATACOMB
	5	THE KINGDOM
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1	THE GOLDEN COMPASS
	2	THE GAME PLAN
	3	FRED CLAUS
	4	EASTERN PROMISES
MARKET! MARKET!	1	THE GOLDEN COMPASS
	2	DEATH PROOF
	3	HOOD OF HORROR
	4	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
	5	CATACOMB
TRINOMA	1	BATANES
	2	DEATH PROOF
	3	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	HOOD OF HORROR GUARANTEED SEATS
	5	ENCHANTED
	6	CATACOMB
	7 THX	THE GOLDEN COMPASS GUARANTEED SEATS

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Market! Market! - 886 7519
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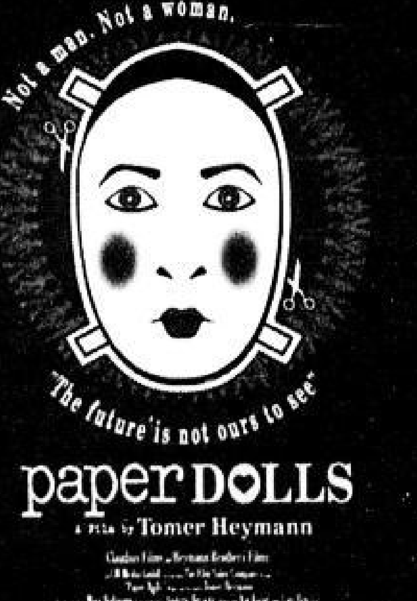
Ayala Malls

glorietta	Stargazing feat. the stars of SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO December 16; 6pm; Glorietta Activity Center
GREENBELT	Holiday Opera Concert December 21; 7pm; Greenbelt 3 Park
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	Regine Velasquez Live! December 16; 6pm; Activity Center
AYALA CENTER CEBU	Spongebob Holiday Show December 16; 11am to 3pm; Paseos
MARKET! MARKET!	The Philippine Star Balikbayan Fair December 14 to 16; Activity Center and Central Plaza
Onstage	Repertory Philippines presents FIDDLER ON THE ROOF November 9 - December 16, 2007 For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710 or visit www.repertory-philippines.com
Ayala MUSEUM	WATER: THE MEDIUM by Juvenal Sanso November 24 to January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery For more info, pls. call 757-7117 to 21 loc. 14 or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org
Tri Noma	Christmas Chorale featuring Pops Fernandez and The UP Cherubim and Seraphim December 16; 6pm; Activity Center FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P500 worth of purchase. See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-938, Series of 2007 December 1 to 31



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in memory of Sally Camatoy, one of the main leads,
who was found dead on the streets of Dubai.
Portion of the proceeds will go to Sally Camatoy family.

DECEMBER 12-18, 2007
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MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)

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Sequels and prequels figure strongly in MMFF lineup

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IN HOLLYWOOD, SEQUELS and prequels have proven to be very popular with viewers. Quite a number of hit movies have their plots extended into subsequent productions that benefit greatly from the original stories' initial success.

It's the "brand name" mentality carried over to filmmaking: A hit film is regarded as a popular product, so its title is in effect a brand that can continue to make money for its producer, from sequel to sequel—sometimes, with a couple of "prequels" thrown in for good measure.

Successful examples of film series abound: In the past, many "Tarzan," Dracula," "Lassie," "Zorro," and "Rocky" sequels were made.

But their success has been roundly eclipsed by the bigger bucks that more recent movie series have earned, like the "Harry Potter," "Lord of the Rings," "Star Wars," "Halloween" and "Back to the Future" films, which have made billions of dollars worldwide.

Thrice-told plots

Even if some sequels are inferior due to their thrice-told plots and exhausted stellar performances, a sufficient number of diehard fans continues to view them, so they still end up in the black.

So, even if many sequels and prequels get more than their share of criticism, they continue to be produced over and over again, because they are an easy sell, and enjoy great viewer "recall."

Expectedly, sequels have also become popular on the local movie scene with hit serial production like the "Ang Panday," "Darna," "Dyesebel," "Shake, Rattle and Roll," "Mano Po" and "Enteng Kabisote" films.

Like their American counterparts, some local movie sequels have a hard time measuring up to the standard set by their initial films. This is particularly true of the thriller-chiller movie series, which have clearly seen better days.

Despite this, sequels dominate this year's Metro Manila Film Festival, with last year's frontrunner, "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo," following up with "Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo," which focuses on lead star couple **Judy Ann Santos** and **Ryan Agoncillo**'s characters' post-wedding bliss—and blues.

For his part, film fest favorite **Vic Sotto** is wrapping up work on a *prequel* to his hit "Enteng Kabisote" fantasy flicks. Titled "Enteng Kabisote 4," the movie nevertheless "starts from the very beginning" in terms of plotting the initial links forged between its human and magical characters. Sotto and **Kristine Hermosa** star.

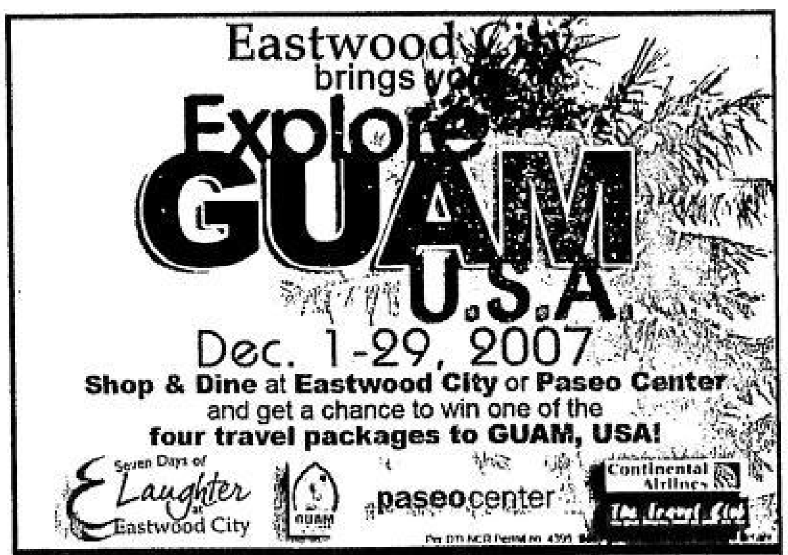
And "Shake, Rattle and Roll 9" features three spooky episodes starring a multigenerational mix of veteran and young leads and supporting players.

Last year, "Enteng" and "Kasal" fought it out for top grosser spot in the film fest, and the same "duel" is expected to involve their sequels in the 2007 festival later this month. But **Bong Revilla's** "Transformers"-like "Resiklo" is also expected to provide strong competition.

Other official film fest entries: "Katas ng Saudi," "Bahay Kubo," "Banal," "Desperadas" and "5 Anak ng Kumander."

On point of star value, the 2007 MMFF entries boasts of the participation of other stellar leads like **Maricel Soriano, Dennis Trillo, Dingdong Dantes, Jennylyn Mercado, Manny Pacquiao, Jinggoy Estrada, Marvin Agustin, Ara Mina, Iza Calzado** and **Ruffa Gutierrez.**

As for quality, the point system for the selected screenplays scored 50 percent for commercial viability, 40 percent for creativity and innovativeness, and 10 percent for cultural and historical values.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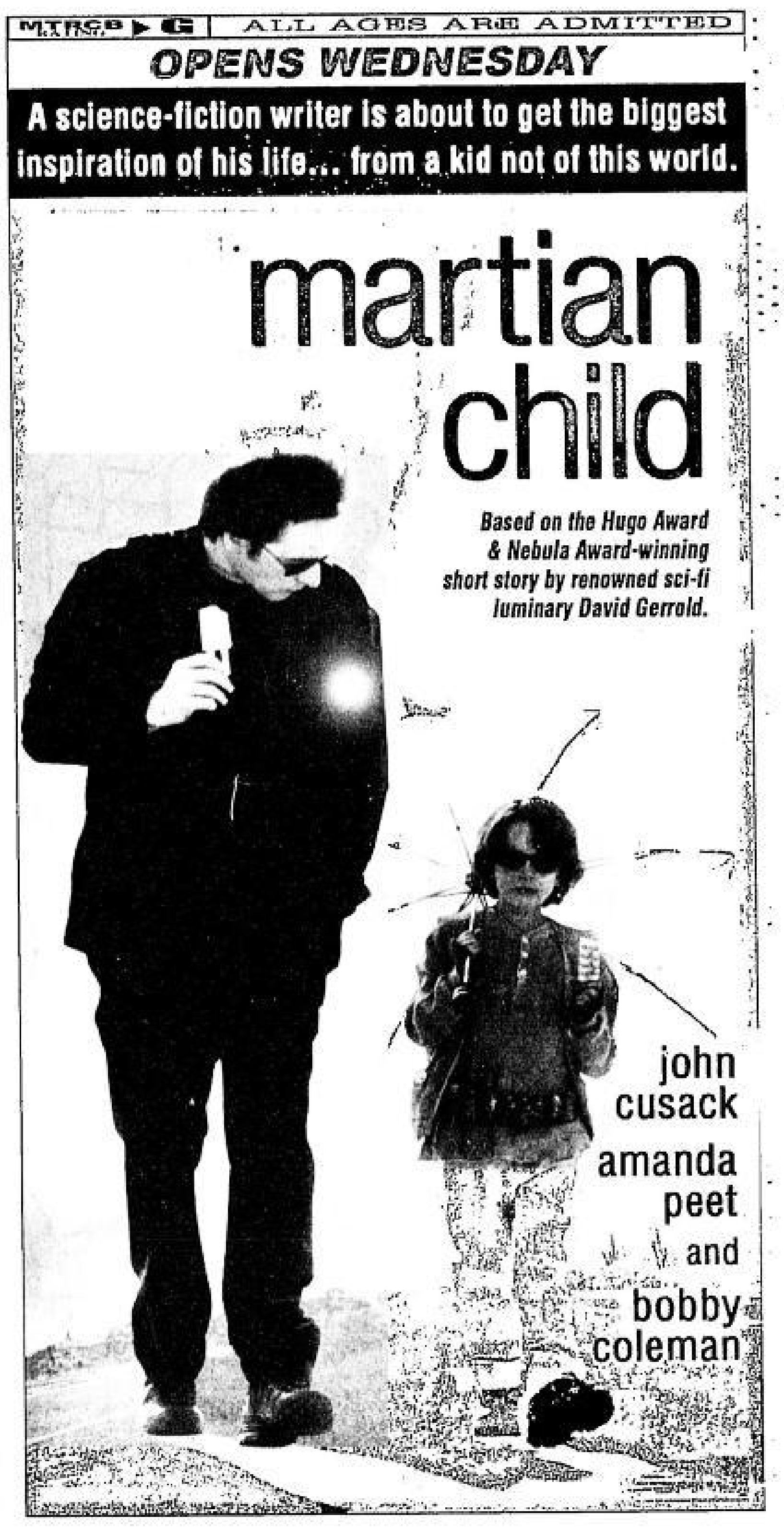
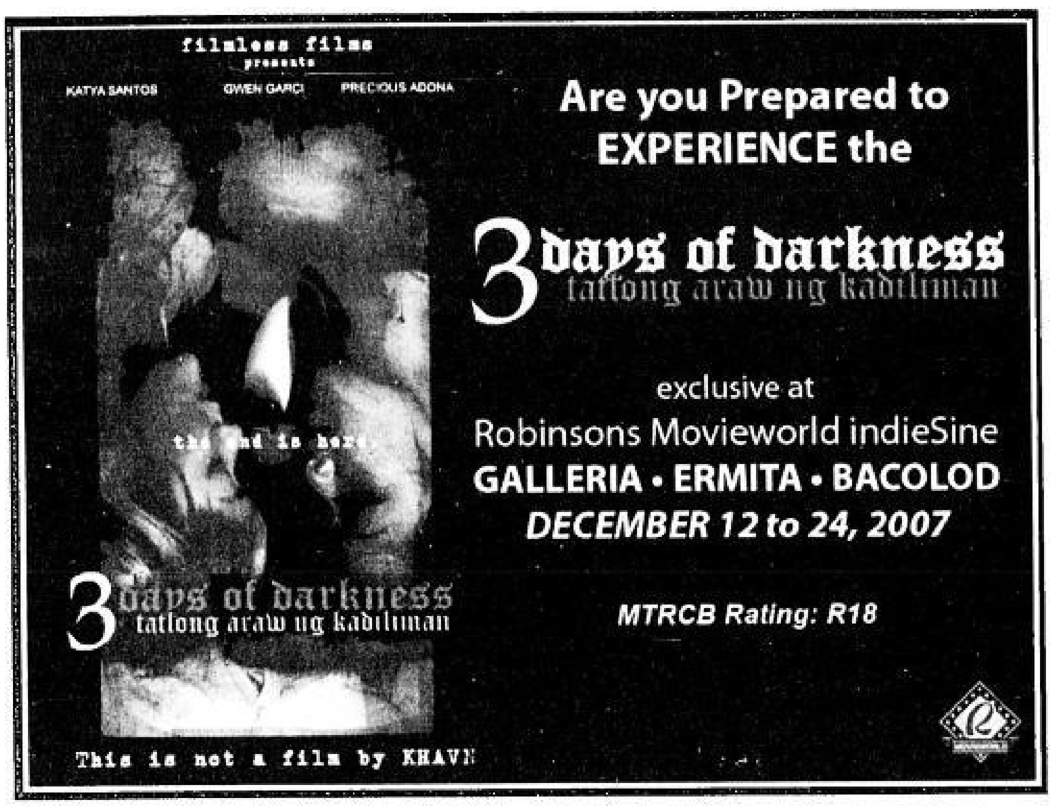
1	ENCHANTED 2:35, 5:15, 7:55, 10:35 G	
2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS 2:40, 5:20, 8:00, 10:35 PG-13	
3	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE 2:00, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30 PG-13	
4	THE KINGDOM 3:20, 8:05 R-13	GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF 5:40,10:30 R-13


MTRCB RATING ▶ G | ALL AGES ARE ADMITTED
OPENS WEDNESDAY
A science-fiction writer is about to get the biggest inspiration of his life... from a kid not of this world.
martian child
Based on the Hugo Award & Nebula Award-winning short story by renowned sci-fi luminary David Gerrold.
john cusack
amanda peet
and
bobby coleman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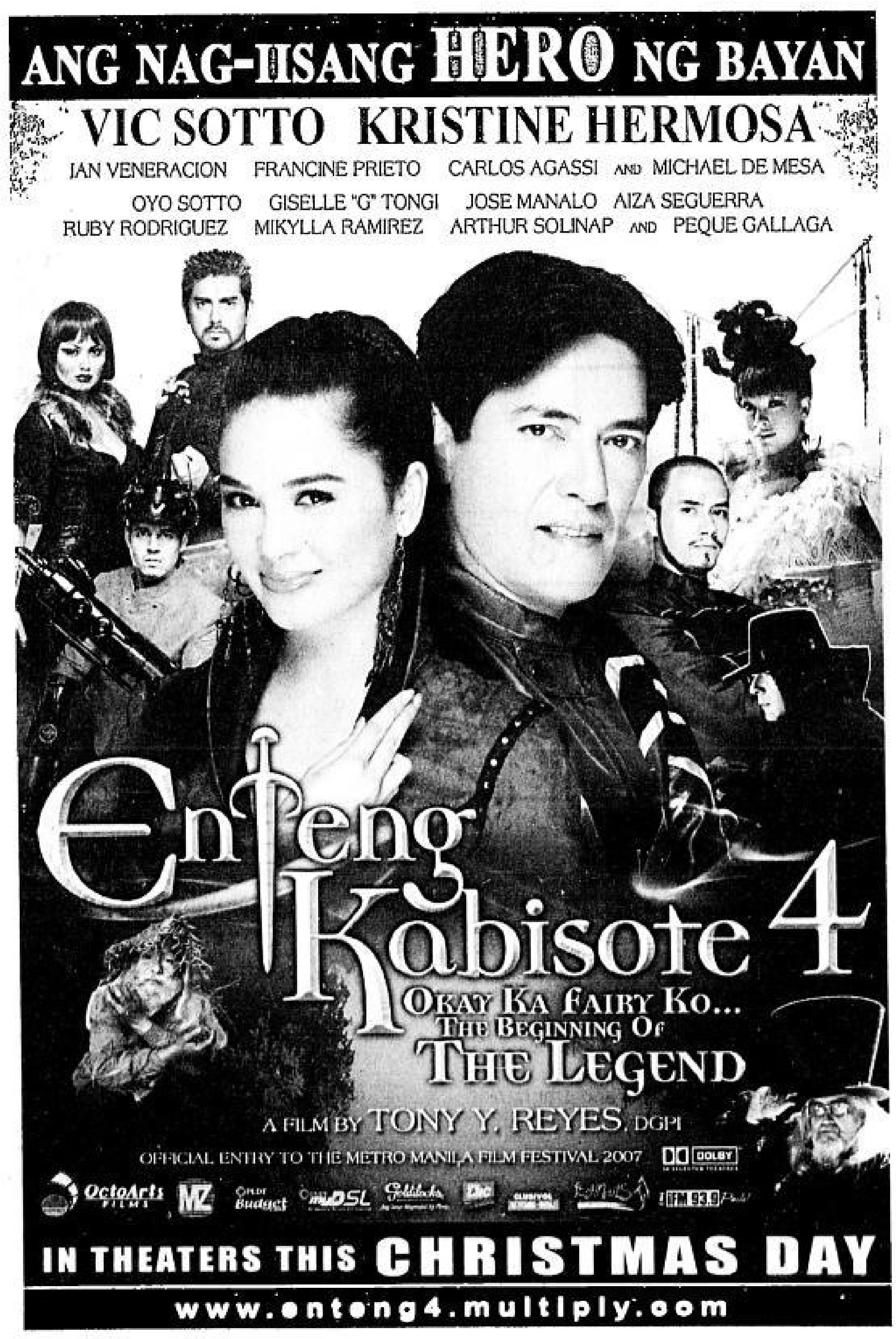
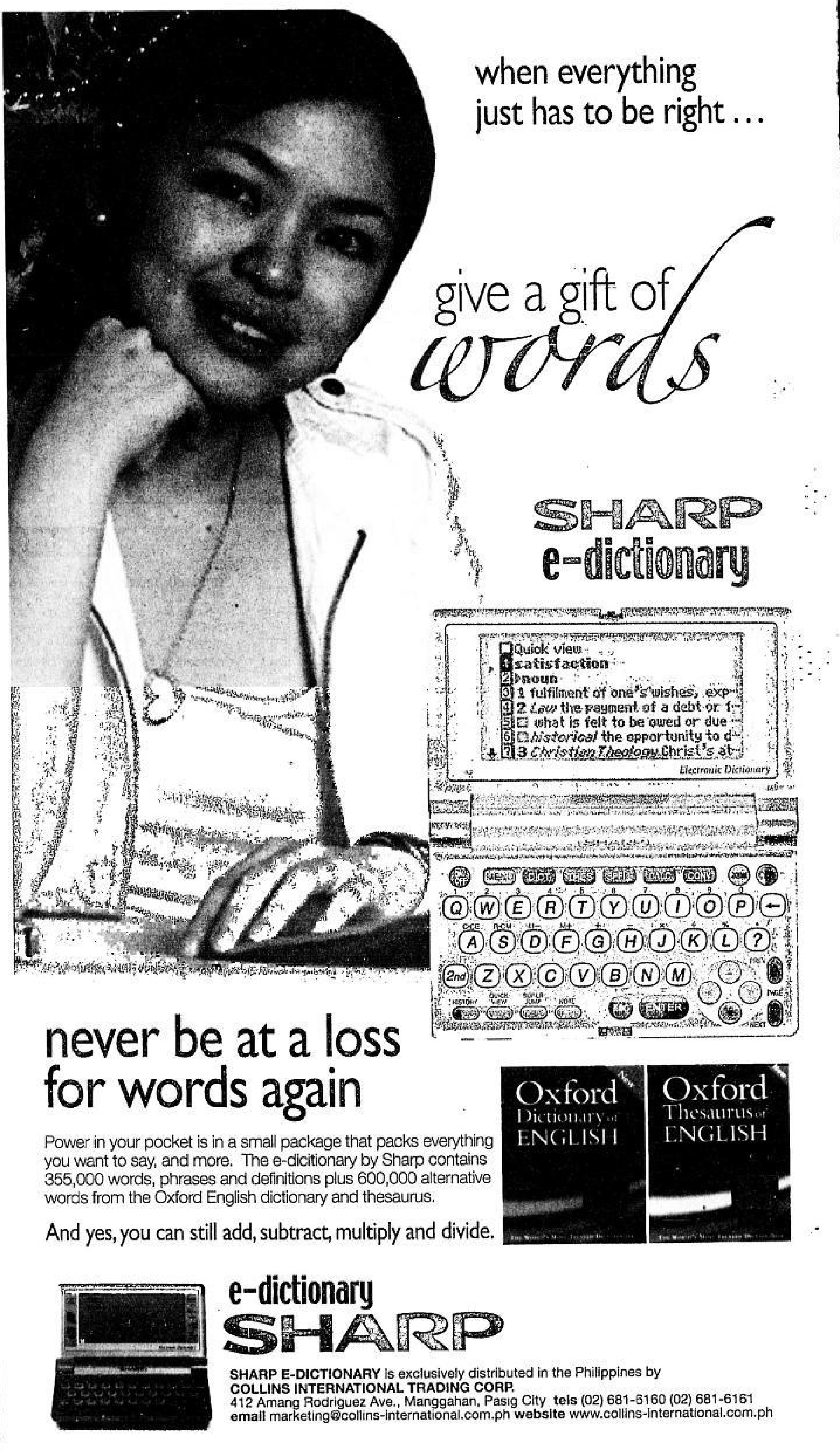
This is not a film by KHAVN


ANG NAG-IISANG HERO NG BAYAN
VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
IAN VENERACION FRANCINE PRIETO CARLOS AGASSI AND MICHAEL DE MESA
OYO SOTTO GISELLE "G" TONGI JOSE MANALO AIZA SEGUERRA
RUBY RODRIGUEZ MIKYLLA RAMIREZ ARTHUR SOLINAP AND PEQUE GALLAGA
Enteng Kabisote 4
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE BEGINNING OF THE LEGEND
A FILM BY TONY Y. REYES, DGPI
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2007
IN THEATERS THIS CHRISTMAS DAY
www.enteng4.multiply.com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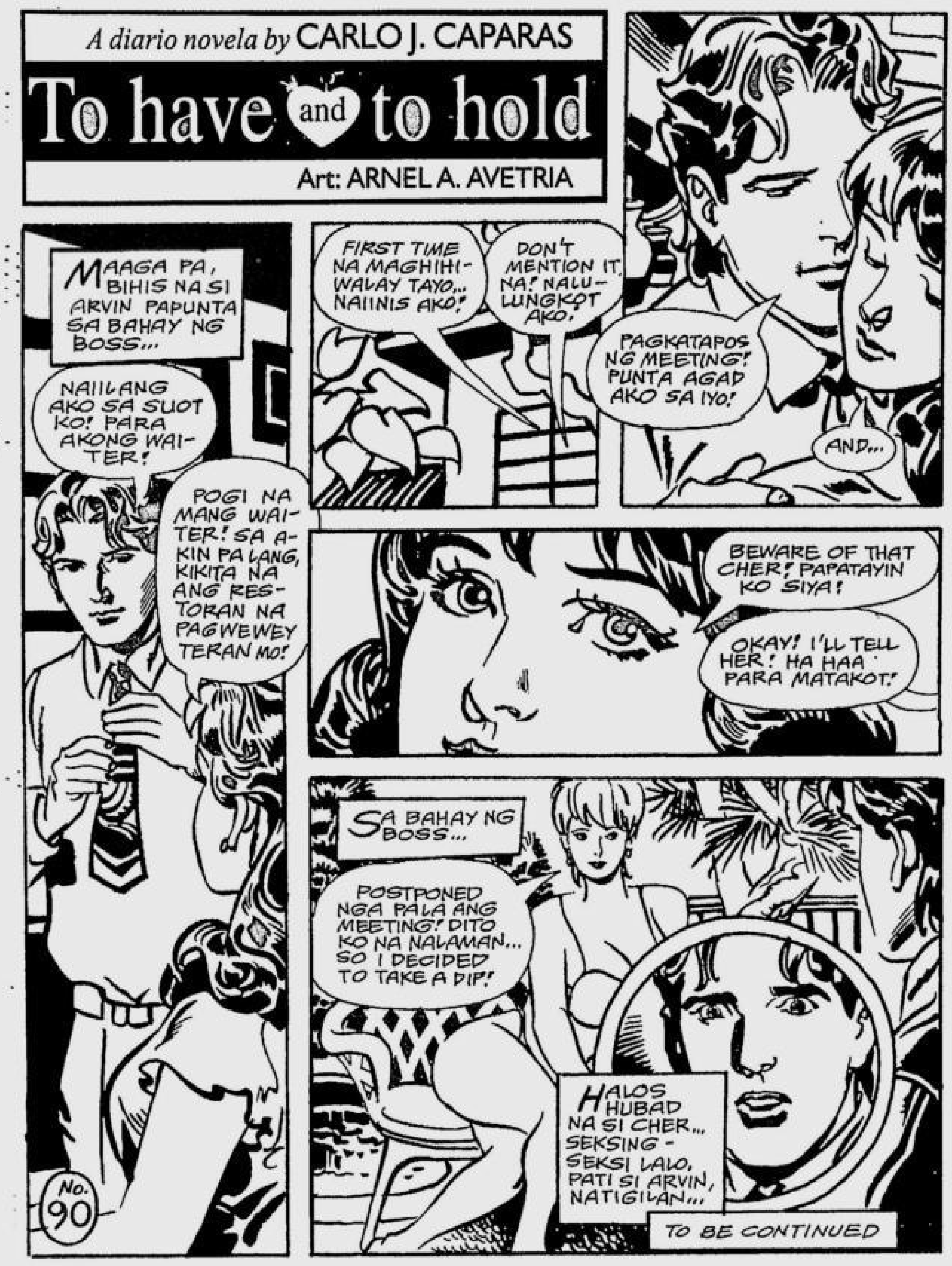
Quick view
satisfaction
noun
1 fulfilment of one's wishes, exp
2 Law the payment of a debt or f
what is felt to be owed or due
historical the opportunity to d
3 Christian Theology Christ's at
Electronic Dictionary
Oxford Dictionary of ENGLISH
Oxford Thesaurus of ENGLISH

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

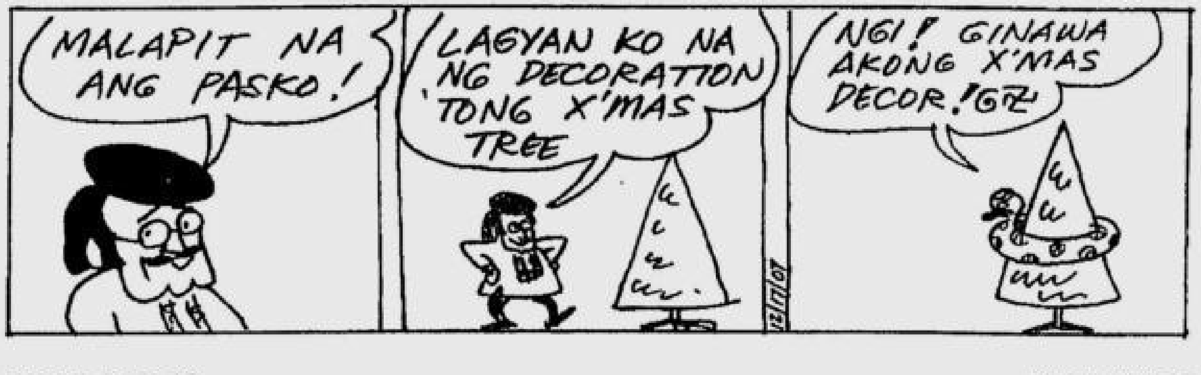
To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA


MAAGA PA, BIHIS NA SI ARVIN PAPUNTA SA BAHAY NG BOSS...
NAIILANG AKO SA SUOT KO! PARA AKONG WAITER!
POGI NA MANG WAITER! SA AKIN PA LANG, KIKITA NA ANG RESTORAN NA PAGWEWEYTERAN MO!
FIRST TIME NA MAGHIHIWALAY TAYO... NAIINIS AKO!
DON'T MENTION IT NA! NALULUNGKOT AKO.
PAGKATAPOS NG MEETING! PUNTA AGAD AKO SA IYO!
AND...
BEWARE OF THAT CHER! PAPATAYIN KO SIYA!
OKAY! I'LL TELL HER! HA HAA PARA MATAKOT!
SA BAHAY NG BOSS...
POSTPONED NGA PALA ANG MEETING! DITO KO NA NALAMAN... SO I DECIDED TO TAKE A DIP!
HALOS HUBAD NA SI CHER... SEKSING-SEKSI LALO, PATI SI ARVIN, NATIGILAN...
TO BE CONTINUED
No. 90

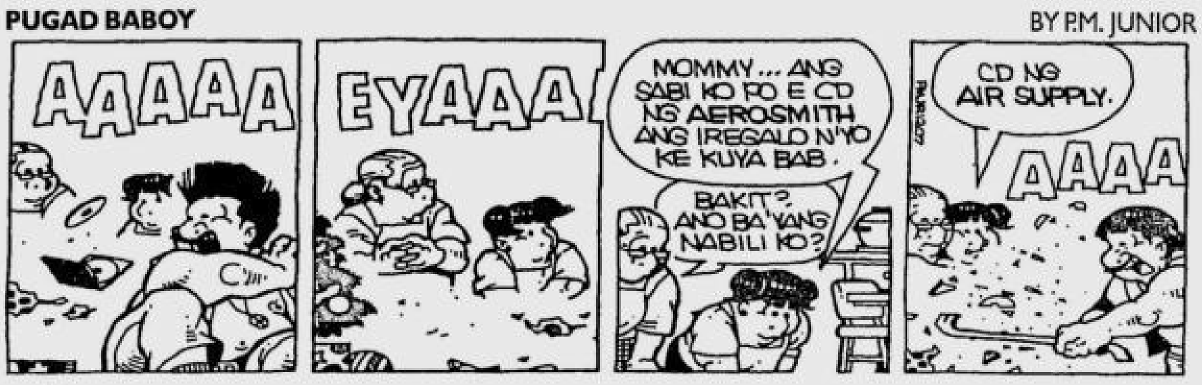
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


MALAPIT NA ANG PASKO!
LAGYAN KO NA NG DECORATION 'TONG X'MAS TREE
NGI! GINAWA AKONG X'MAS DECOR! GR
12/17/07

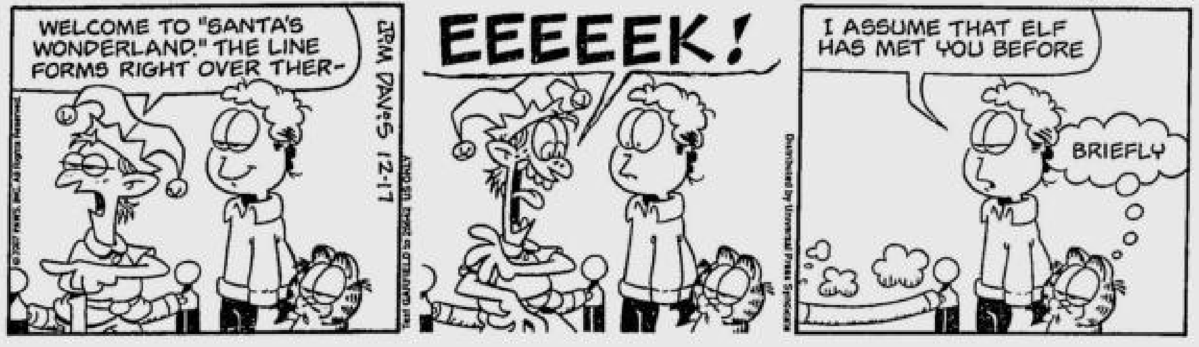
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


AAAAA
EYAAA
MOMMY... ANG SABI KO PO E CD NG AEROSMITH ANG IREGALO N'YO KE KUYA BAB.
BAKIT? ANO BA'YANG NABILI KO?
CD NG AIR SUPPLY.
AAAA

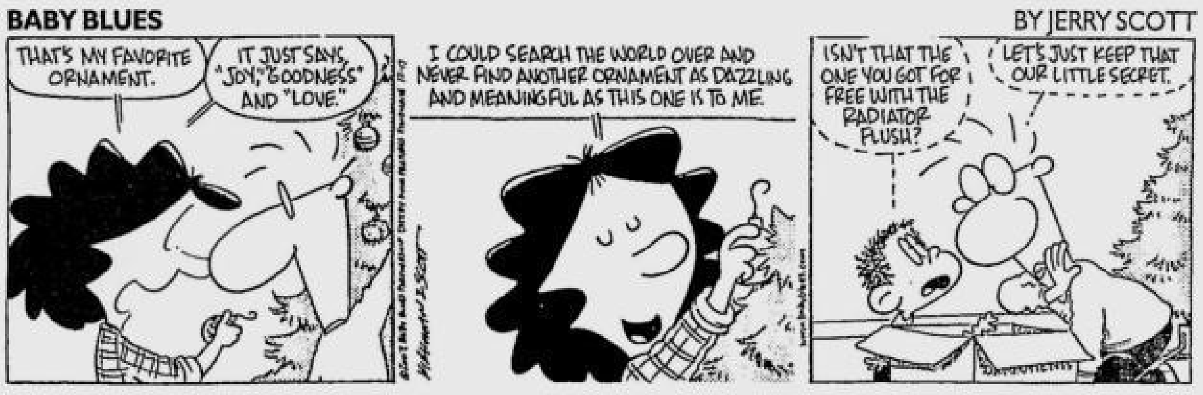
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


WELCOME TO "SANTA'S WONDERLAND." THE LINE FORMS RIGHT OVER THER-
JPM DAVIS 12-17
EEEEEK!
I ASSUME THAT ELF HAS MET YOU BEFORE
BRIEFLY
Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate

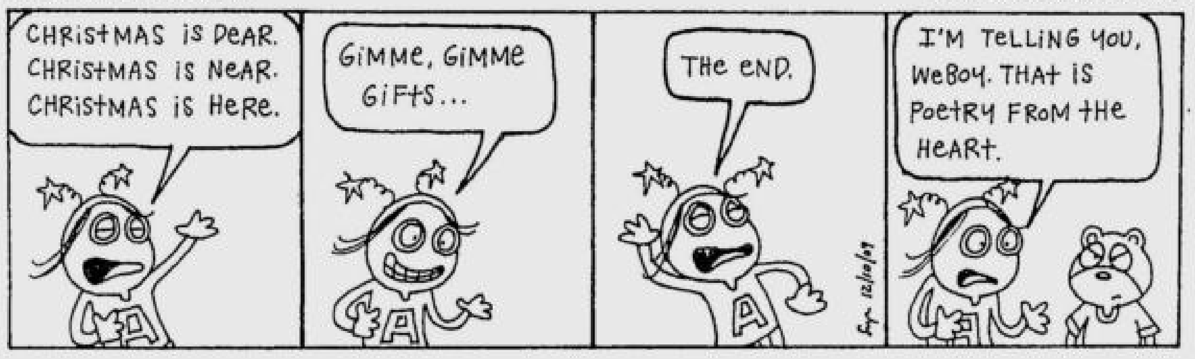
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


THAT'S MY FAVORITE ORNAMENT.
IT JUST SAYS, "JOY," "GOODNESS" AND "LOVE."
I COULD SEARCH THE WORLD OVER AND NEVER FIND ANOTHER ORNAMENT AS DAZZLING AND MEANINGFUL AS THIS ONE IS TO ME.
ISN'T THAT THE ONE YOU GOT FOR FREE WITH THE RADIATOR FLUSH?
LET'S JUST KEEP THAT OUR LITTLE SECRET.

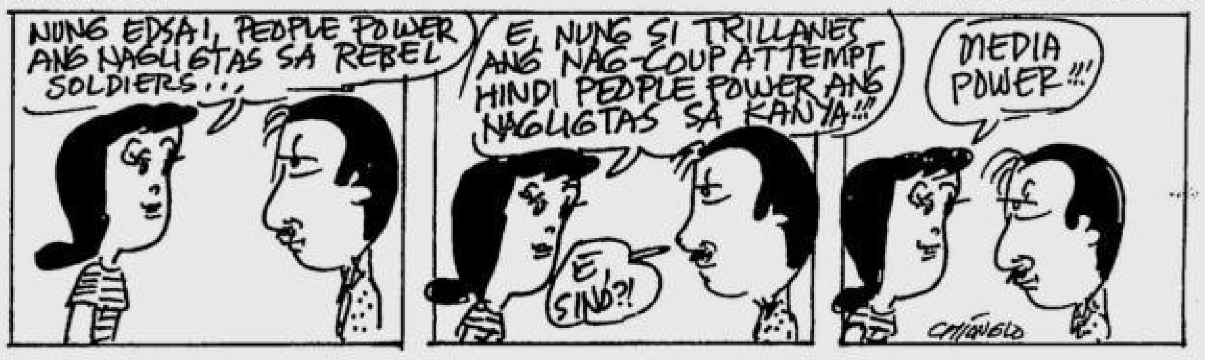
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


CHRISTMAS IS DEAR. CHRISTMAS IS NEAR. CHRISTMAS IS HERE.
GIMME, GIMME GIFTS...
THE END.
I'M TELLING YOU, WEBOY. THAT IS POETRY FROM THE HEART.

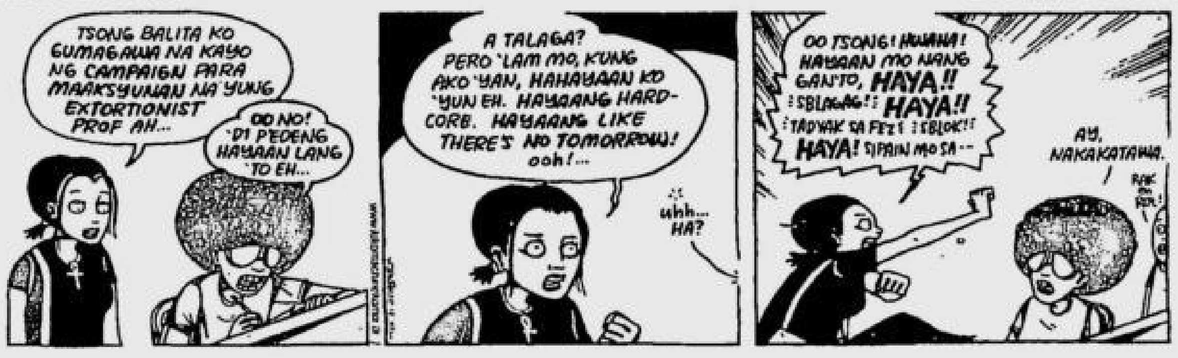
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NUNG EDSA I, PEOPLE POWER ANG NAGLIGTAS SA REBEL SOLDIERS...
E, NUNG SI TRILLANES ANG NAG-COUP ATTEMPT HINDI PEOPLE POWER ANG NAGLIGTAS SA KANYA!!
E, SINO?!
MEDIA POWER!!!
CHIONGLO

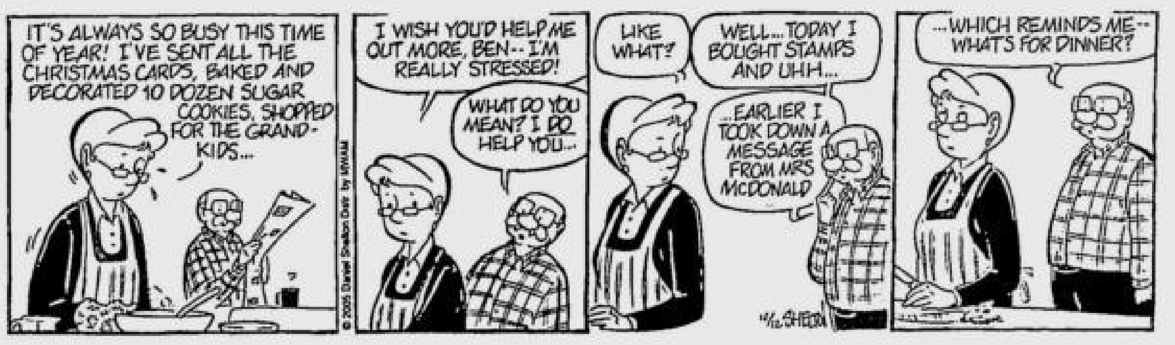
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


TSONG BALITA KO GUMAGAWA NA KAYO NG CAMPAIGN PARA MAAKSYUNAN NA'YUNG EXTORTIONIST PROF AH...
OO NO! 'DI PEDENG HAYAAN LANG 'TO EH...
A TALAGA? PERO 'LAM MO, KUNG AKO 'YAN, HAHAYAAN KO 'YUN EH. HAYAANG HARD-CORE. HAYAANG LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW! ooh!...
uhh... HA?
OO TSONG! HUWAHA! HAYAAN MO NANG GANTO, HAYA!! !SBLAGAG!! HAYA!! !TADYAK SA FEZ!! !SBLOK!! HAYA! SIPAIN MO SA--
AY, NAKAKATAWA.

BEN

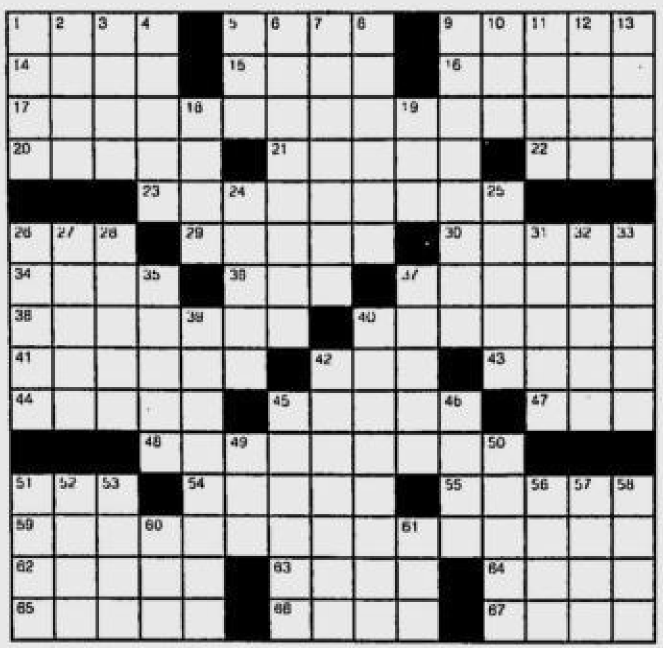
BY DANIEL SHELTON


IT'S ALWAYS SO BUSY THIS TIME OF YEAR! I'VE SENT ALL THE CHRISTMAS CARDS, BAKED AND DECORATED 10 DOZEN SUGAR COOKIES, SHOPPED FOR THE GRAND-KIDS...
I WISH YOU'D HELP ME OUT MORE, BEN-- I'M REALLY STRESSED!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I DO HELP YOU...
LIKE WHAT?
WELL... TODAY I BOUGHT STAMPS AND UHH...
...EARLIER I TOOK DOWN A MESSAGE FROM MRS McDONALD
...WHICH REMINDS ME-- WHAT'S FOR DINNER?
© 2005 Daniel Shelton
SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
- 1 Man from Belgrade
- 5 Particle
- 9 Exams
- 14 Tug
- 15 California wine valley
- 16 Capital of Vietnam
- 17 Bob Marley hit
- 20 Bring together
- 21 Action or change starter
- 22 Set down
- 23 Learned superficially
- 26 Columbus Day mo.
- 29 Earlier
- 30 Cobwebby
- 34 Small combo
- 36 Mountain pass
- 37 Small nightclub
- 38 With 40A, weapons topic
- 40 See 38A
- 41 Play some morel
- 42 Golf norm
- 43 Smooth comparative
- 44 Rocket starter?
- 45 Gaseous element
- 47 Layer
- 48 Short musical compositions
- 51 Passing craze
- 54 Has has one
- 55 Conical residence
- 59 Hemingway novel
- 62 Supply the food
- 63 Cabbage dish
- 64 Easy victory
- 65 Shock or lock
- 66 Tex-Mex menu item
- 67 Rock from side to side

DOWN
- 1 Worker's wedge
- 2 Relaxation
- 3 German industrial region
- 4 Contemporary journals
- 5 Picnic pest
- 6 Papeete resident
- 7 Like a convertible
- 8 Original copy
- 9 High tremolo instrument
- 10 Musical gift
- 11 Barber's motion
- 12 Vegetarian's staple
- 13 Process, as flour
- 18 Short-term worker
- 19 "And I Love __"
- 24 Quibble
- 25 Does some light housekeeping
- 26 Additional
- 27 Heron's cousin
- 28 Add color to
- 31 Landing area
- 32 Fairy-tale villain
- 33 Partly eggy
- 35 Smells
- 37 Element #5
- 39 Furrow makers
- 40 Michigan city
- 42 Kneecap
- 45 Most unrefined
- 46 Defense org.
- 49 At this time
- 50 Chicago tower
- 51 Undeniable truth
- 52 Way, way off
- 53 Palm fruit
- 56 Projecting part
- 57 Poet Lazarus
- 58 Catch sight of
- 60 Notes of scales
- 61 Tango team



By Stanley B. Whitten
Highwood, IL

12/17/07

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

S	C	R	A	B	B	L	E	■	R	E	H	E	E	L
P	O	O	L	R	O	O	M	■	A	D	E	S	T	E
I	M	P	L	A	N	T	S	■	M	O	R	P	H	S
T	R	I	A	G	E	■	■	Z	O	M	B	I	E	S
F	A	N	■	■	■	C	A	A	N	■	■	A	N	E
I	D	E	A	L	I	S	T	S	■	E	E	L	E	R
R	E	S	P	E	C	T	F	U	L	L	Y	■	■	■
E	S	S	E	N	E	■	■	■	A	I	R	I	E	R
■	■	■	A	N	T	I	P	A	R	T	I	C	L	E
T	A	C	K	Y	■	M	U	R	D	E	R	E	S	S
C	E	O	■	■	B	A	B	E	■	■	■	C	I	T
E	R	O	S	I	O	N	■	■	K	A	H	U	N	A
L	I	K	I	N	G	■	P	R	O	L	A	B	O	R
L	A	I	N	I	E	■	R	E	A	S	S	E	R	T
S	L	E	E	T	Y	■	S	Y	N	O	P	S	E	S

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12/17/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You like things to be structured and stable in your life. You're earthy and very practical; you're a realist. You believe that actions speak louder than words. You distrust fanciful thinking. You appreciate the arts. Others know they can rely on you. In the year ahead, an important decision or choice could arise. Choose wisely.

Birthdate of: Wes Studi, actor; Milla Jovovich, actress; Erskine Caldwell, author.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Avoid heated arguments about politics, religion or education. They aren't worth it. If you get involved, they will disturb your own peace of mind.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today gets better as it wears on. By evening, gifts, goodies and favors definitely can come your way. Keep your pockets open and your fingers crossed!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Either you or a friend has strong opinions about something today. This could lead to arguments or disputes. Don't even go there. Good news related to work or your health arrives this evening.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Power struggles with authority types are likely today. But they will be brief. Nevertheless, people are irritable and also unpredictable. Keep a low profile!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Parents should be patient with children today. A lot of people are irritable and impatient with each other. Since you know this ahead of time, you can avoid this pitfall.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Don't try to prove anything to others today. Let sleeping dogs lie. Don't make a big deal about things. By evening, good news makes you smile.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): People at work might be pushy today. Others think they know best. However, you might be the one who knows best because, late in the day or by evening, some kind of financial news pleases you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're keen to make improvements or introduce reforms at work or to your health. This positive attitude will have its payoff later in the day, when something unexpected pleases you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Be patient with romantic partners today. Similarly, be patient with children. People involved in sports are intense and determined today. By evening, you feel happy about something.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Avoid arguments at home. They're not important, and very little is really at stake. Surprise company could contact you this evening.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): People have strong opinions about everything today, but the truth is, nothing really matters. It's all small potatoes. Parents and bosses could be the source of good news late in the day.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Rather than give in to compulsive urges to spend money, why not give things a sober second thought? Late in the day, opportunities related to travel and education are exciting.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu By Dave Green

	1	5	3					
	7		6			5	3	4
	4	9	7			1		8
						6	1	7
				8				
2	3	4						
7		1			3	9	8	
4	8	6			5		2	
					7	4	5	

Difficulty Level ★

12/17

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

9	7	3	8	2	6	5	4	1
5	1	8	4	3	9	6	7	2
2	4	6	7	1	5	9	3	8
8	6	2	3	9	7	1	5	4
3	5	4	1	6	2	8	9	7
1	9	7	5	8	4	2	6	3
4	2	5	6	7	1	3	8	9
6	3	1	9	4	8	7	2	5
7	8	9	2	5	3	4	1	6

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

12/16

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1 HITMAN • THX 1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
3 BEOWULF 12:40 3:00
4 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
5 CATACOMBS 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
6 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
7 ENCHANTED 12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20 9:30
8 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS 12:40 2:45 4:50 6:55 9:00
9 BATANES 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
10 HOOD of HORROR 1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9:50

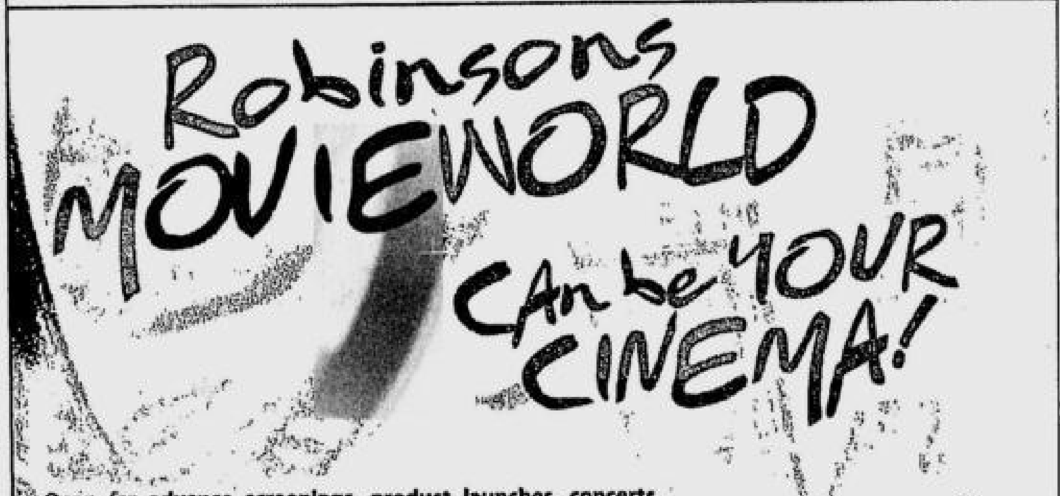
ERMITA

Ticket Price: P110 / P120

1 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF 1:00 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00
2 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS 12:50 2:40 4:30 6:20 8:10 10:00
3 BEOWULF 12:00 2:10 4:20
HITMAN 6:35 8:20 10:00
4 HOOD of HORROR 12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00
5 BATANES 12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8:05 10:00
6 ENCHANTED 12:40 2:55 5:10 7:25 9:40
7 PASUKOB 12:30 2:20 4:10 6:00 7:50 9:40

Midtown

1 CATACOMBS 12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00
2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS 11:35 1:40 3:45 5:50 7:55 10:00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1 EASTERN PROMISES 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE 11:05 1:30 3:55 6:25 9:00
3 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
4 BATANES 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
5 HOOD of HORROR 12:30 2:40 4:50 7:00 9:10
6 ENCHANTED 12:30 2:30
BEOWULF 4:35 6:45 9:00
7 THE GOLDEN COMPASS 10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05
8 CATACOMBS 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

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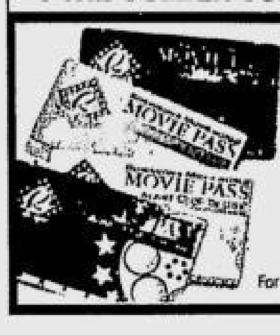

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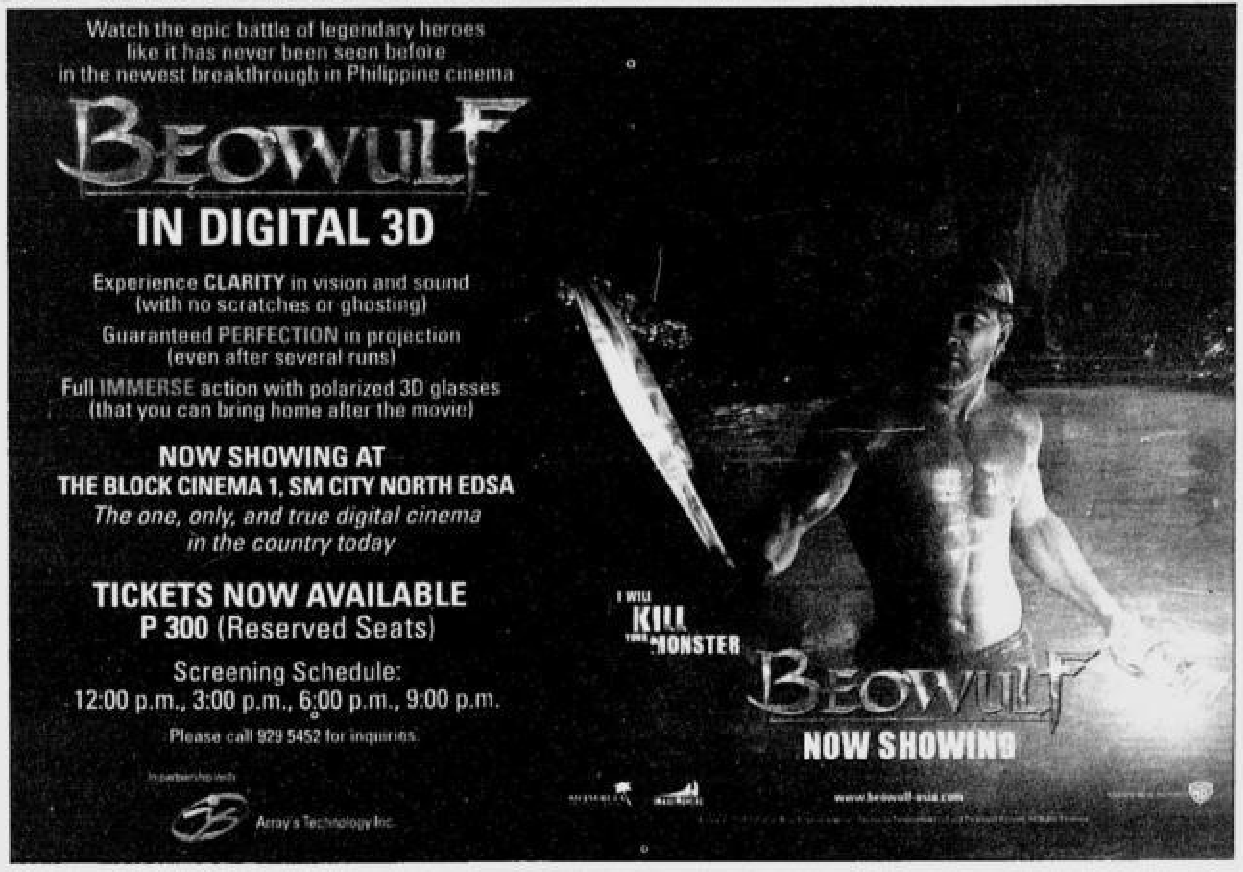

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11 CARTOON NWTWORK
12 ONE MORE CHANCE

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9 HOOD OF HORROR
10 PASUKOB
11 DEATH PROOF
12 CATACOMBS

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12 EASTERN PROMISES/ CARTOON NETWORK

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6 BATANES

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2 DEATH PROOF
3 GOLDEN COMPASS
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2 BATANES
3 ONE MORE CHANCE
4 ELIZABETH
5 PASUKOB
6 DEATH PROOF
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9 HOOD OF HORROR/ CARTOON NETWORK

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2 DEATH PROOF
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4 BATANES
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6 ELIZABETH
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7 SHIRI
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2 PASUKOB
3 BATANES
4 HITMAN

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3 PASUKOB
4 ONE MORE CHANCE

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3 GOLDEN COMPASS
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4 VHAGETS
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3 HITMAN
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3 THE GAME PLAN
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Jessica Bunevacz: Now I know who my real friends are

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

COULD IT BE TRUE THAT **JESSICA Rodriguez** and her husband **David Bunevacz** had a falling out with Beverly Hills 6750 aesthetic clinic because of David's alleged misallocation of company funds?

He was the clinic's CEO while Jessica handled its PR. Talk is spreading that the beleaguered couple used the clinic's money to buy a BMW, a Porsche and other luxury items to keep up with their lavish lifestyle.

I texted a colleague who handles the promos of BH for the story behind the story but I got no reply. Through a common friend, Jessica sent this text from the US where she and David are spending the holidays: "I know that *parang ginamit kami* actually. *Nung nagkapangalan na 'yung* clinic, *iba na*. We just found out that they have a different motive. It will come out eventually. *Ayoko pang lumabas* but in time I will. Now I know who my real friends are."

Jessica was the one who cooked up Beverly Hills' "Ms. Ugly No More" contest. Ironically, things are now turning ugly between the Bunevaczes and the clinic.

Erap biopic

Heard that the camp of former president **Joseph Estrada** has plans of producing an Erap biopic with **Jinggoy** portraying his dad. If it pushes through, then a lot of actresses have to be tapped to play Erap's many love interests. His colorful love life alone is more than enough movie material.

Guess who

I couldn't stop laughing when a gay friend exclaimed "*Que barbaridad*! Why are they pinpointing a male singer to be the cause of the split up of a celebrity couple? Don't they know that he's gay and he has a BF?" One love fits all?

Futuristic film

Bong Revilla is more than proud to announce that his movie in the MMFF, "Resiklo" (Imus Productions), is bigger than "Exodus," his entry last year, and is slated for international release. It is a futuristic film about an attempt of alien invaders to annihilate Planet Earth.

Bong portrays the leader of holocaust survivors in the Philippines, clad in recycled uniforms (old tires, junk and military equipment). The movie is environment-friendly; it encourages moviegoers to recycle.

Lucky streak

Jolina Magdangal's lucky streak continues. She bagged three awards during her birthday month: Gintong Kabataan award, given by her hometown Bulacan; Best Talent Search Host, from the Philippine Movie Press Club; and Golden Artist, from Famas.

Jolens considers it not so much an award as a reward for two decades of hard work. She is raring to start her movie with **Gabby Concepcion** which will be ala "Roman Holiday." Any day is a good day to be Jolens.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

DEPP AND BURTON. A crew member once eavesdropped on them and understood nothing. AP

Reunited, and it feels so bloody

NEW YORK—DRESSED IN DRAG and standing in front of a meat locker, Johnny Depp smiles into the camera and declares, "Tim's a swell guy."

This warm and weird moment, played out between scenes during the filming of 1994's "Ed Wood," encapsulates the collaboration between Depp and director Tim Burton.

Their sixth film together is "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street," a new adaptation of Stephen Sondheim's gory musical about a barber who slits his customer's throats.

"Who'd have ever thought?" wondered Burton at a recent interview, where he and Depp both still found it incomprehensible that two guys who don't like musicals had just made one.

Self-deprecating

While reminiscing about 17 years of working together, Depp and Burton often pick up each other's conversational trails, most of which end in some kind of self-deprecating joke.

Burton continued: "Now you're going to get all these scripts and be like, 'Shall I do,' Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' or 'Jesus Christ Superstar?'"

Depp retorted: "'Hair.' Then ... 'Annie.'"

The two chuckle at mainstream fare because they have both specialized in offbeat eccentrics. Their paths first crossed in 1990's "Edward Scissorhands" when Burton cast Depp in his first lead role following his teen success on TV's "21 Jump Street."

"I remember walking into that coffee shop like it was yesterday," said Depp. "I knew instantly that he was the real thing. There was an instant connection."

While many of the classic director-actor pairings (John Ford and John Wayne, Akira Kurosawa and Toshiro Mifune) have often focused on a particular genre, the Burton-Depp collaborations span a variety of films, albeit ones with a penchant for fantasy.

Besides "Scissorhands" and "Ed Wood," their previous projects include "Sleepy Hollow" (1999), "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" (2005) and the animated "Corpse Bride" (2005).

"We've been lucky enough to do things that the studios never want to do," said Burton, with Depp adding: "On more than one occasion."

"It's surreal," says Burton, a veritable expert on the subject. "The feeling never quite leaves you—it's almost like getting away with something."

Burton has maintained a mostly consistent record of box office or critical success, and Depp has ascended to the top of the A-list—which has made their risky endeavors a lot easier to bankroll.

The advantage of frequently working together, Burton and Depp said, is that they have a well-developed shorthand and are able to discuss characters in abstract terms but still arrive at the same understanding.

Depp recalled, "When we were doing 'Sleepy Hollow,' a crew member came over and said, 'I listened to you and Tim talk for 20 minutes and I didn't understand a word you said.'"

Strange family

"That about sums it up," quipped Burton.

The two are close friends; Depp is godfather to Burton's young son. Burton said this wasn't planned: "It [was] just project to project. If it's the right role, something he responds to ... I always think of him because he can do anything."

Chris Lebenzon, who has edited Burton's last nine films, five of which have starred Depp, compares Burton's movie sets to a strange kind of family.

"Tim needs the best people around him because he won't always articulate what he wants, but he knows it," said Lebenzon. "It frustrates him if people aren't getting it, and Johnny always gets it."

"I'll never do it again," said Depp of singing. "This only worked because of the circumstances."

"When Johnny said he thought he could do it, that was good enough for me," said Burton.

Though they have no immediate plans to work again together, they both hope—and rather assume—it will happen.

Says Depp: "If the phone rings, he doesn't even have to finish the sentence. I'll be there in a second." AP

CHEER FACTOR

Voted most gracious

NEW YORK—Johnny Depp is the most gracious celebrity—for the third year in a row—on Autograph magazine's annual list of the "10 Best and 10 Worst Hollywood Signers."

Next is Matt Damon, then George Clooney, Jack Nicholson, Rosario Dawson, John Travolta, Katherine Heigl, Jay Leno, Dakota Fanning and Russell Crowe. AP

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THE KINGDOM R13 12:30,2:55,5:20	DEATH PROOF R13 1:30,3:40,5:50	ELIZABETH THE GOLDEN AGE PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30

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Jack Bauer will finally unravel the mastermind behind his toughest day yet as the finale of 24 Season 6 airs this December. This season has seen Jack encounter the presence of his brother and the stomach-churning possibility that other family members of the Bauer clan may be involved in the day's frightening events.

The Sole Survivor will be known this December, as SURVIVOR China will reveal its $1 million winner. Find out who was able to outwit, outplay and outlast the competition only on C/S!

See it first with C/S this 2008!

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While many channels have claimed to be capable of providing premium and quality entertainment as demanded by today's discriminating TV audience, no one else has come close except for one channel, C/S.

On January 1, 2008, C/S, the pioneering authority when it comes to showing the latest, most talked about shows can now be seen on Free TV RPN 9, thus ushering in an unparalleled selection of top-notch, quality programming to Filipino homes nationwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

C/S is the home of the latest seasons of huge TV hit series such as *Heroes*, *24*, and *Prison Break*, including award-winning and critically acclaimed titles that include *The Sopranos*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *The X-Files*, the *Survivor* franchise and the *Law & Order* franchises.

C/S is set to premiere many new shows which include the highly anticipated re-imagining of *Bionic Woman*; the odd adventures of *Chuck*; the long awaited debut of the *Terminator* movie franchise in Terminator: *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*; the engaging espionage of *Burn Notice* and the TV debut of James Patterson's *Women's Murder Club*.

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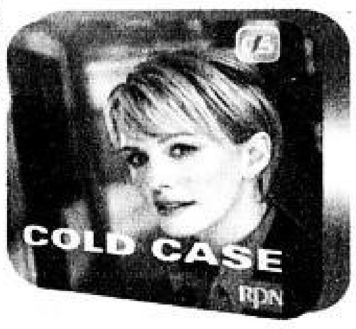
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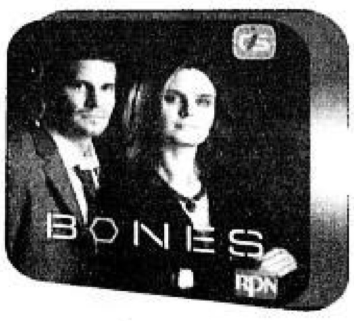

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RPN

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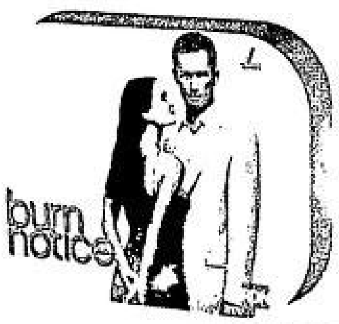
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TV 5 Cagayan De Oro | RPN 9 Cebu | TV 8 Bacolod

SKYCABLE 14

C/S

It's a new *destination* with *new neighbors* on 2nd Avenue

It was not too long ago that finding a TV channel that catered to the whims and desires of those who live a truly unique urban lifestyle used to be non-existent until *2nd Avenue*, the channel that featured entertainment without borders, made its TV debut.

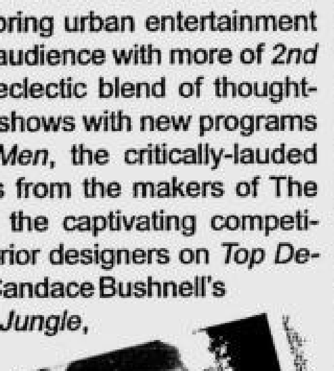
Finally, urbanites, socialites and everyone in between were able to enjoy the pleasures of a channel that kept them entertained with engaging talk shows, up-to-the-minute news programs, compelling dramas, side-splitting sitcoms and unscripted reality series.

2nd Avenue is the official residence of *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* as it is also the place where the latest seasons of highly acclaimed programs *Nip/Tuck, Weeds, Men in Trees and The New Adventures of Old Christine* can be seen.

2nd Avenue is where you hear the latest on the world's current events with Matt Lauer and Meredith Vieira on the *Today Show* and it's also your portal to the world behind the velvet rope with entertainment news programs such as *Entertainment Tonight and Insider.*

On January 1, 2008, *2nd Avenue*, the premiere urban entertainment channel will now be seen on Free TV UHF RJTV 29 introducing an unparalleled selection of top-notch, quality programming to Philippine TV viewers nationwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

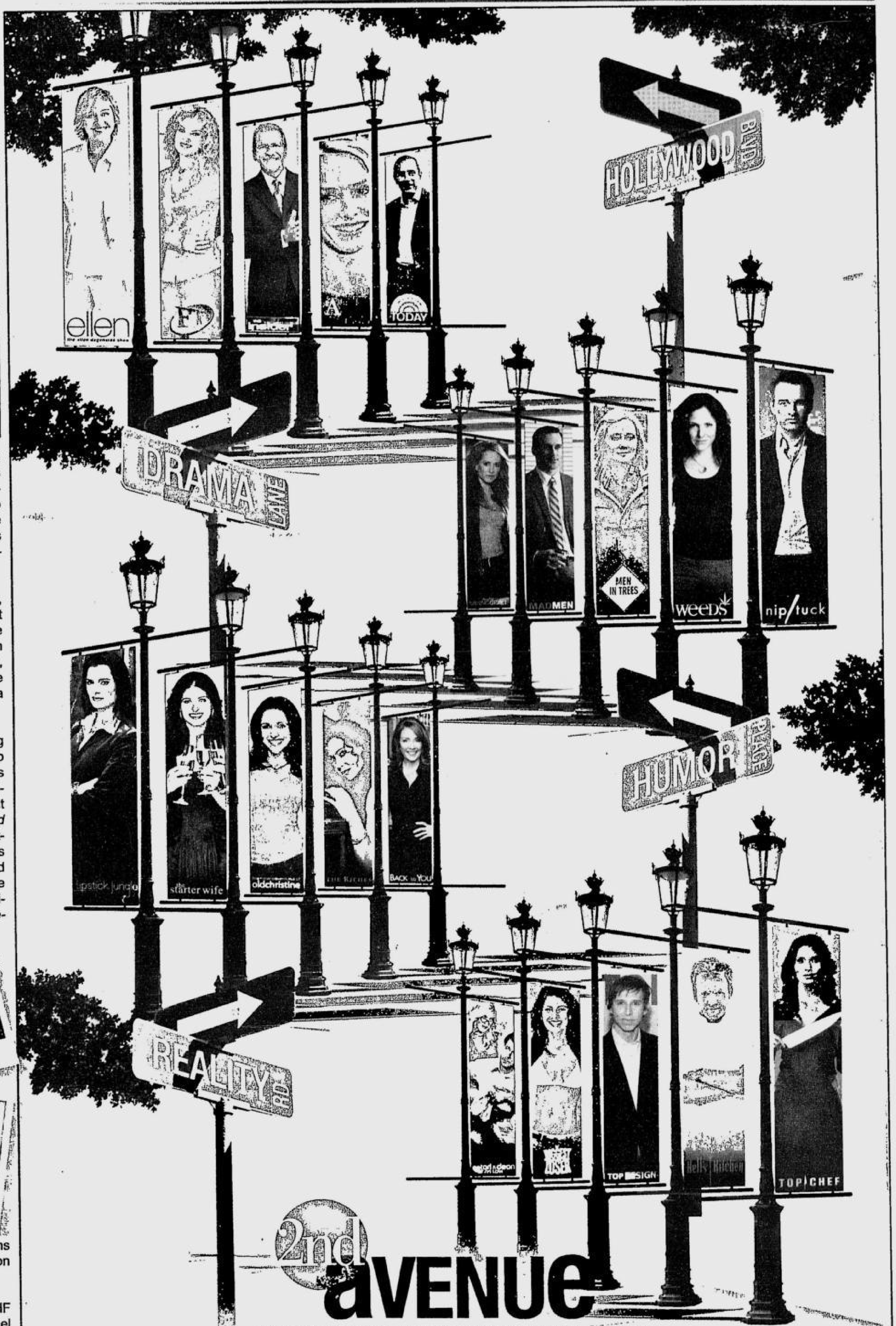
2nd Avenue is indeed ready to bring *"entertainment without borders"* to an all-new level this coming year, as it prepares to traverse further horizons and bring urban entertainment to a wider audience with more of *2nd Avenue's* eclectic blend of thought-provoking shows with new programs like *Mad Men*, the critically-lauded new series from the makers of The Sopranos; the captivating competition of interior designers on *Top Design*, and Candace Bushnell's *Lipstick Jungle*, a stylish new series featuring a powerful and chic triumvirate.



With a new destination and new neighbors on the same avenue, viewers will get more of the engaging, fascinating & scintillating programs they enjoy that can only be found on *2nd Avenue.*

2nd Avenue will now be seen on UHF RJTV 29 and on Sky Cable channel 19, Destiny Cable channel 31 and Dream Satellite TV 36.

TOP DESIGN



New Destination. New Neighbors. Same Avenue.

Now on Free TV. In Metro Manila:

UHF RJTV Channel 29

Skycable - Channel 19

Global Destiny Cable Ch. 31

Dream Satellite TV 36

The News and the newsmaker on ETC!

CBS EVENING NEWS
with Katie Couric

the early show

gossip girl

Set to make its premiere amongst ETC's vibrant new programs for 2008, Gossip Girl tells the tale of socialite young adults growing up on New York's Upper East Side. Actress Blake Lively (The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants) leads an ensemble cast in this highly popular series based on Cecily von Ziegesar's bestselling novels of the same name. Created by Josh Schwartz and Stephanie Savage, Gossip Girl explores the drama of many contemporary teenage issues.

Get news and analysis of today's pressing matters happening around the world as evening news broadcast makes its return to ETC with the debut of The CBS Evening News with Katie Couric. She took the place of long-time anchor Dan Rather, and is the first woman to solo-anchor of the weekday evening news on one of the three traditional U.S. broadcast networks.

ETC keeps it all good and all free this 2008!

Keeping up to date with the latest in Hollywood lifestyle and fashion usually requires reading the latest fashion magazines, surfing the internet and spending a lot of time watching various channels on TV.

Nevertheless, one doesn't have to spend that much time keeping up with what's in vogue with Hollywood and the rest of the world because there already is one channel that provides all the latest Hollywood news, hip fashion programs and the most vibrant lifestyle shows today, and that is ETC!

Beginning January 1, 2008, ETC, will now be seen on Free TV UHF SBN 21, introducing an unparalleled selection of top-notch, quality programming to Philippine TV viewers nationwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

ETC showcases the best fashion and lifestyle programs that keep many fashionistas and fashionistas-at-heart gleefully content, including the latest seasons of the popular *America's Next Top Model, Project Runway.* More fashion advice come in *Queer Eye* (with the Fab Five), *Style Her Famous* (with Jay Manuel) and *Tim Gunn's Guide to Style.*

ETC also airs live broadcasts of *E! News* and *Daily Ten* that feature the hottest Hollywood news & gossip, keeping those who need to know, in the know. New seasons of the high school drama *Friday Night Lights*, the off-beat *How I Met Your Mother* and the glitzy *Entourage* are likewise all set to air.

ETC is set to introduce a slew of vibrant new programs for 2008 including the hit freshman series Gossip Girl starring Blake Lively and the much anticipated summer debut of *Project Runway Philippines*, an elegant local version of the well-liked show.

Late evening viewers will laugh to their heart's content as *The Late Show with David Letterman* makes its ETC debut while *The CBS Evening News with Katie Couric* marks the return of quality newscast to the channel's line-up.

ETC continues to be the epicenter of all that's happening in the world of entertainment and the coming New Year will absolutely bring more vibrant and engaging TV experience for everyone!

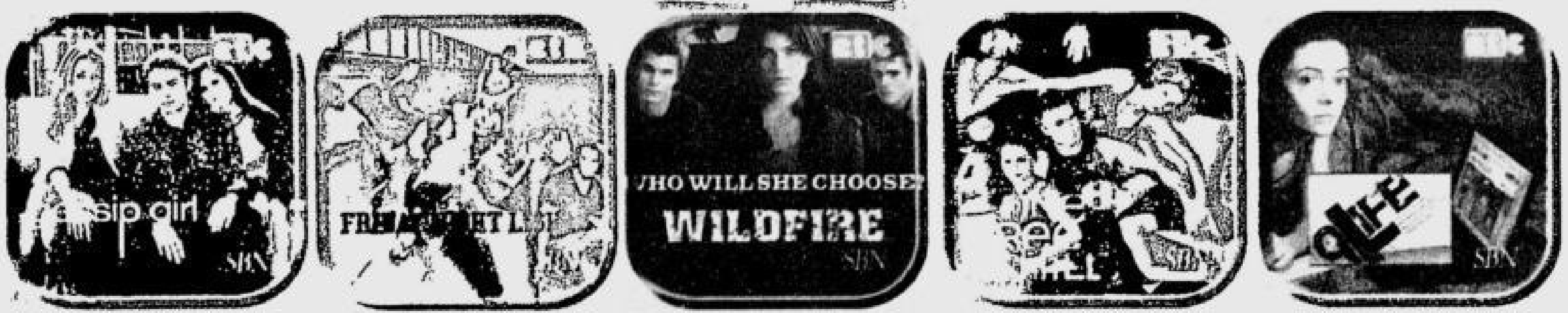
Get the all good entertainment of ETC now on UHF SBN 21, SkyCable channel 16, Destiny Cable channel 30, Cable Link channel 50, Dream Satellite channel 27 and also available on My TV.

ALL GOOD ALL FREE!

etc

ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

all DRAMA



ALL TALK

etc
tyra
SBN
CBS EVENING NEWS

etc
entourage
SBN
The GAME
boys
how i met your mother

all laugh

All Style

etc
project RUNWAY
SBN
AMERICA'S NEXT TOP MODEL
shear genius
SBN

etc
simple life
PUSSYCAT DOLLS PRESENT
GIRLICIOUS
SBN
Beauty GEEK
The BACHELOR
SBN

All Real

All on

Metro Manila
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SkyCable Ch 16
Global
Destiny Ch 30

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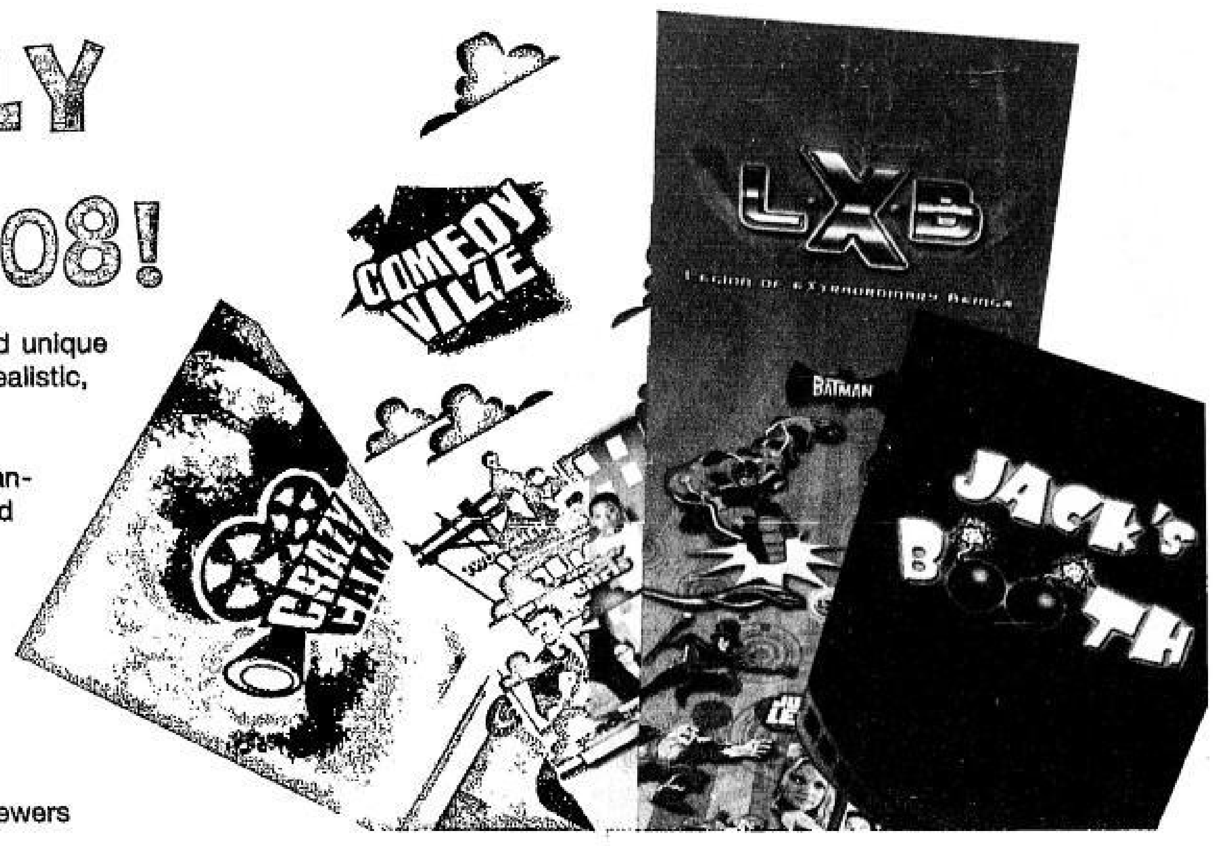
Also available on
myTV

Jack TV, Definitely The channel for 2008!


COMEDY VILLE
LXB
LEGION OF EXTRAORDINARY BEINGS
BATMAN
CRAZY CAM
JACK'S BOOTH

Definitely nothing reaches out to viewers more like Jack TV! Through its diversified and unique programming, Jack TV has become a reflection of its many viewers who are young, idealistic, active and who think out-of-the-box.

On January 1, 2008, Jack TV will be available on Destiny Cable channel 32, Cablelink channel 41 and on 300 cable affiliates nationwide, bringing to millions of viewers its diversified and unique programming that has anything and everything for thrill-seeking and adventurous young adults.

Jack TV is home to many of today's most watched programs like the professional wrestling action of the WWE including *WWE Raw* & *WWE Smackdown*, the groundbreaking animated humor of *The Simpsons*, and the award-winning comedy of Steve Carell in *The Office* amongst many others.

Jack TV carries an assortment of distinctive shows that definitely tickle the fancy of viewers who are hungry for true entertainment.

In the coming year, Jack TV will raise it's standards of programming with more powerful programs that will get the viewers hooked for more.

No other channels can compete with Jack TV's program blocks that have become the staple for every TV fanatic.

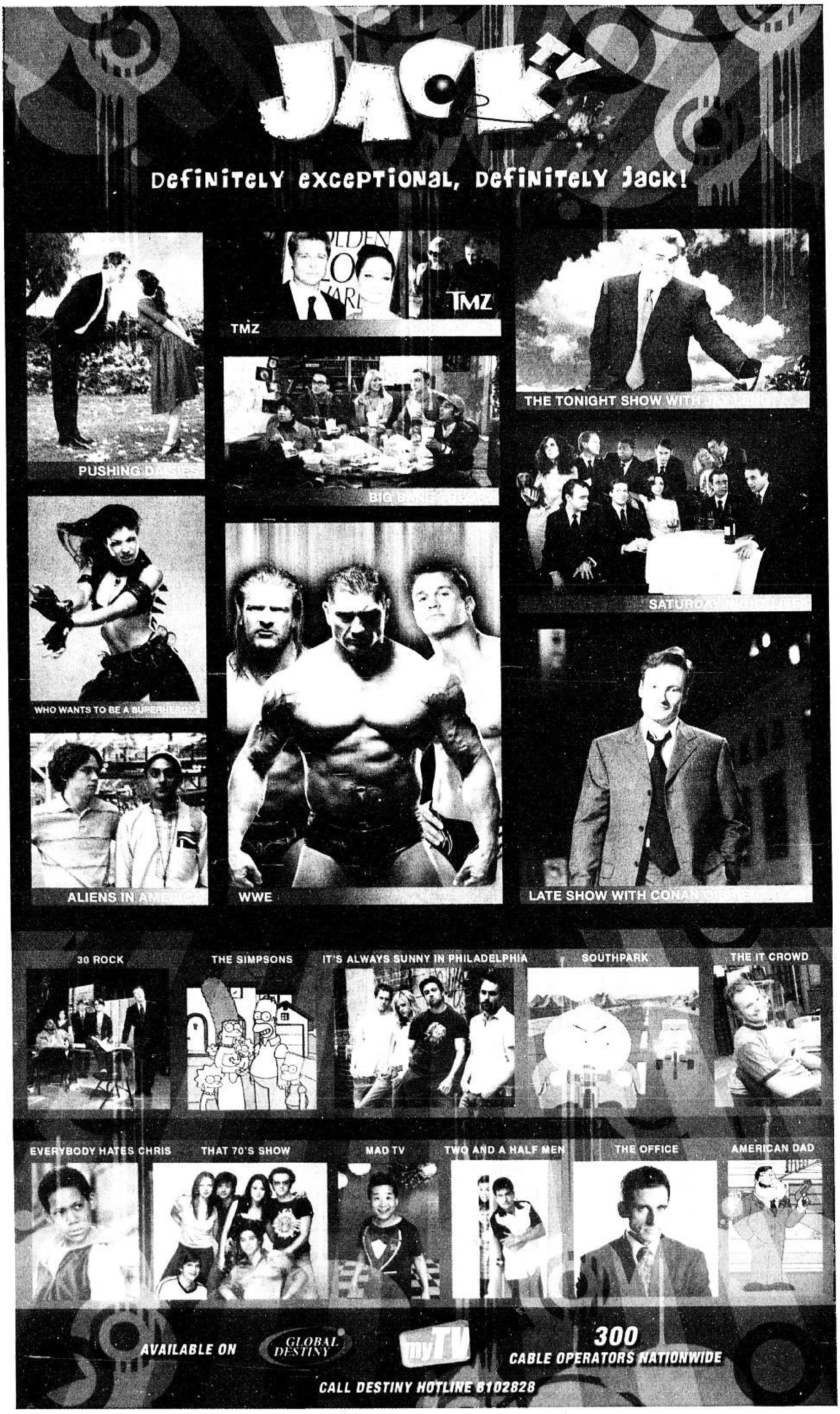
More top-notch sitcoms such as *The IT Crowd, Big Bang Theory, Aliens In America* and *Unhitched* are moving into Comedyville block, joining its growing collection of award-winning series and sitcoms that bring high-quality entertainment to your TV screens.

The Crazy Cam block gets even crazier with the addition of *When Hidden Cameras Attack*, while classic comic icons will continue to grace the TV screen on LXB block.

Jack's Booth is still the one-stop ticket for the best and most entertaining movies with more promising events and concerts that viewers will surely wouldn't want to miss.

Jack TV viewers will experience a year like no other as the award-winning live sketch comedy show *Saturday Night Live* make its Jack TV debut while the late night laughs of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* will entertain the nocturnal. The highly anticipated freshman series *Pushing Daisies* will also join the roster of enjoyable Jack TV programs.

No where else can you find real alternative entertainment! Get hooked with the number one alternative channel on cable TV, Jack TV, available on Destiny Cable channel 32, Cablelink channel 41 and My TV.


JACK TV
Definitely exceptional, definitely Jack!
PUSHING DAISIES
TMZ
BIG BANG THEORY
THE TONIGHT SHOW WITH
SATURDAY
WHO WANTS TO BE A SUPERHERO? 2
ALIENS IN AMERICA
WWE
LATE SHOW WITH CONAN
30 ROCK
THE SIMPSONS
IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA
SOUTHPARK
THE IT CROWD
EVERYBODY HATES CHRIS
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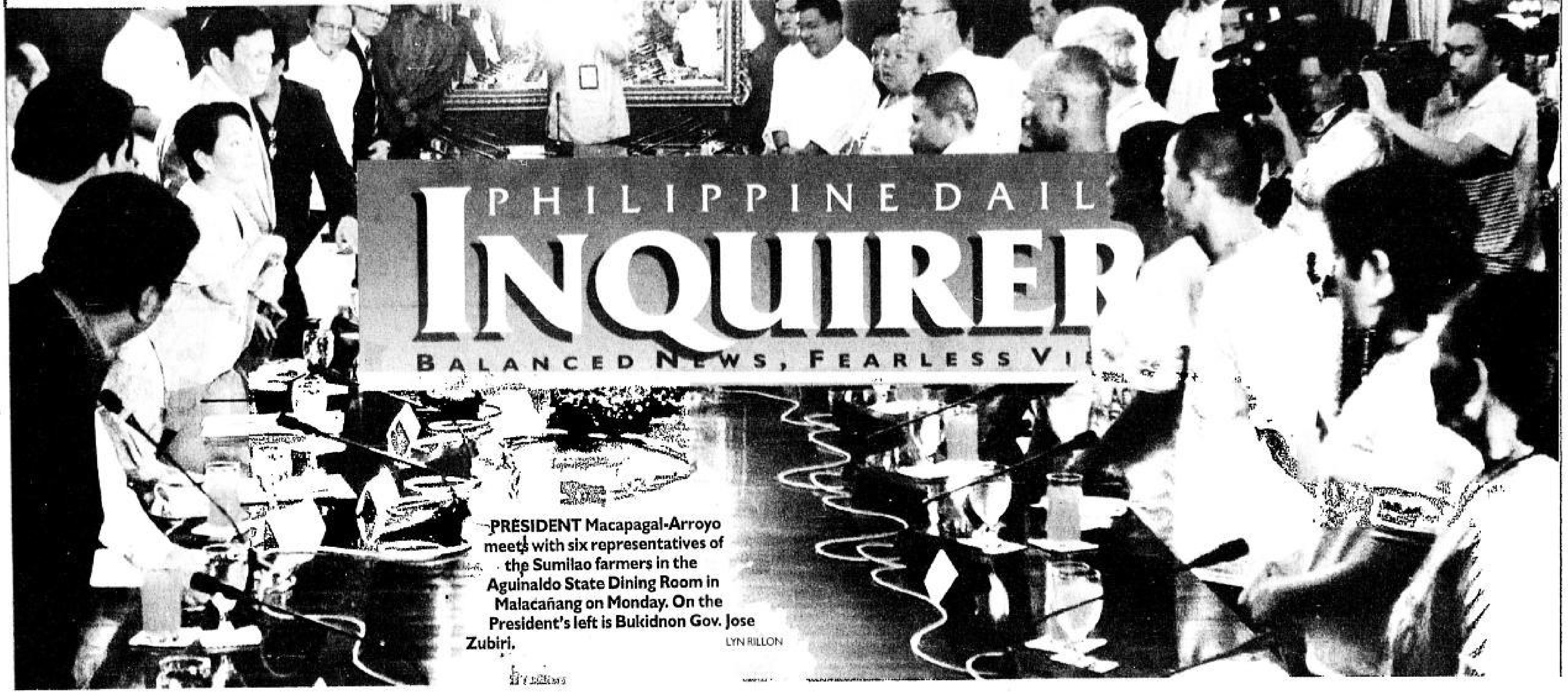
PHILIPPINE DAIL
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VI



PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo meets with six representatives of the Sumilao farmers in the Aguinaldo State Dining Room in Malacañang on Monday. On the President's left is Bukidnon Gov. Jose Zubiri. LYN RILLON

GMA lifts farmers' hopes

Marchers from Sumilao meet President

DAR ISSUE
CEASE & DESIST ORDER
NOTICE of COVERAGE TO 144 HECTARES

PRIESTS, nuns and seminarians accompany the Sumilao farmers on their march to Malacañang on Monday to see the President. REM ZAMORA

By Beverly T. Natividad
and Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday embraced farmers who had walked for 1,700 kilometers over two months to see her in Malacañang to demand a return of their ancestral land, which Catholic bishops in a meeting with her late last night predicted would result in a "positive" decision.

After an hourlong meeting with the farmers in Malacañang in the afternoon, Ms Arroyo proceeded to the headquarters of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines where she again met with Bishops Francisco Claver, Dinualdo Gutierrez and Broderick Padillo for a 30-45 minute consultation. Three representatives of the Sumilao farmers were present in the gathering.

Briefing reporters later in the night, Padillo said that Ms Arroyo, accompanied by Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol, Bukidnon Gov. Jose Zubiri and Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman, outlined a decision to resolve the farmers' demands.

"We're very optimistic about the deci-

GMA LIFTS/ A17

CPP-NPA rejects truce; AFP vows to hunt rebels

By Nikko Dizon
and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

GEN. HERMOGENES ESPERON JR., chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, announced yesterday that troops would hunt down communist guerrillas who killed three Marines, but said the 22-day ceasefire during the holidays unilaterally declared by the government would remain in force.

Esperon told reporters the military would go after the killers of the Marines, pointing out that guidelines for the suspension of operations directed troops to pursue "lawless elements, to patrol around camps and to secure communities."

Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, dismissed the government truce as nothing but "gibberish."

CPP-NPA/ A10

2, 445, '25 to 40' key to saving Earth

BALI, INDONESIA—BEHIND THE MILLIONS of words in documents, speeches and slick brochures at the Bali climate conference lay a set of simple numbers—2 and 445 and "25 to 40."

That's 2 degrees Celsius, 445 parts per

2, 445/ A15

Malacañang downplays GMA checkup

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG SOUGHT TO DOWNPLAY yesterday President Macapagal-Arroyo's latest trip to the hospital, with Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye saying the Chief Executive went only for a "routine checkup."

Bunye said he did not know the details of the President's checkup on Sunday night at St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City but surmised it may have something to do with her having a "hoarse voice."

A hospital source said Ms Arroyo went to the hospital and left after two hours.

A close presidential aide, Medy

MALACAÑANG/ A8

Starting Jan. 1, water to cost more in Metro

By Amy R. Remo

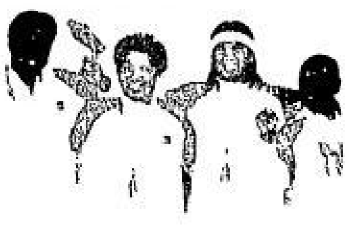
STARTING JAN. 1, A HOUSEHOLD consuming 30 cubic meters of water monthly in the east zone of Metro Manila will have to pay an additional P2.08 a day, according to Manila Water Co. Inc. (MWCI).

These households will need to shell out about P62 more for their monthly water bill, which will go up to P395 from the current P333.

In the west zone, however, the aver-

STARTING/ A10

WHAT'S INSIDE



US-trained swimmers saved RP's SEAG stint
SPORTS / A24

Gov't cuts '08 export target to 8 percent
BUSINESS / B1

How to fall in love with exercise
LIFESTYLE / C1

MAGANDANG TAYAAN ANG NUMERONG YAN

'I'm a free man, I'm not a prisoner anymore'

EDWIN BACASMAS

"**I WILL SUE** the government if I'm not released soon," former Congressman Romeo Jalosjos tells the INQUIRER at the New Bilibid Prisons' tennis club on Monday.

By Julie M. Aurelio

HE LOOKS AND TALKS AND MOVES like a free man. When the impulse seizes him, he even plays tennis. He has also booked a Philippine Airlines ticket for his hometown in Mindanao.

So determined is former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos, the convicted rapist of an 11-year-old girl, in asserting his claim to freedom that he has threatened to sue the government if it does not release him.

"If by Wednesday afternoon there is no action yet, we will go to court," Jalosjos told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Authorities at the New Bilibid Prisons on Sunday ordered Jalosjos' discharge in line with President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision in April to commute to 16 years the double life sentence he received for the 1996 rape of a minor. The INQUIRER has a copy of the order.

But Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez blocked the former lawmaker's release, saying that based on the Department of Justice's initial computation of

I'M A FREE MAN/ A8

GMA heeded public clamor, says Palace

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Leila B. Salaverria

PUBLIC CLAMOR, NOT POLITICS, was behind the decision to keep former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos in prison, Malacañang said yesterday.

"He's still in jail. This is proof to our critics that we have a listening President," Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol said in a phone interview.

He said Ms Arroyo saw the clamor against the early release of the convicted child-rapist.

"There's a public clamor that he should not be released yet, so the President told the Bureau of Corrections to stop his release," Apostol said.

"It was not politics," he said, adding

GMA HEEDED/ A8

Church asks gov't: Focus on other elderly prisoners

By Beverly T. Natividad

CHURCH LEADERS YESTERDAY asked the government to focus its concern on other prisoners who might be more deserving of a presidential pardon than former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos, a convicted rapist whose release was abruptly stopped by Malacañang.

Puerto Princesa Bishop Pedro Arigo, head of the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care (ECPPC), said his office had submitted a list of 122 inmates who were at least 70 years old to the Department of Justice for review of their cases.

"If it is really possible, we hope they can be released, too," Arigo said in an interview over Catholic-run Radio Veritas.

He cited the cases of ousted President Joseph Estrada, a convicted plunderer, and Pablo Martinez, one of those con-

CHURCH/ A8

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Second FRONTPAGE

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Website: www.inquirer.net/nation

BASTA AKO HINDI SABERSIB, HA!

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms while Luzon will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Mostly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Mostly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Mostly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Mostly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Mostly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Mostly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: SCHATZI QUODALA, PDI RESEARCH/12/17/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

EZ2
21 14

FOUR DIGIT
9 5 2 7
(In exact order)

Mid-Day **SUERTRES** Evening
6 6 9 | 7 1 0

MEGALOTTO 6/45
6 16 19 22 36 41
₱15,933,141.00

Subversion law to stay buried

Revival of 'Jurassic' act draws sharp rebuke from most sectors

By Nikko Dizon, Christian V. Esguerra and Jerome Aning *in Manila* **and Nestor P. Burgos Jr.**
Inquirer Visayas Bureau

DEFENSE SECRETARY GILBERT Teodoro said yesterday the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines was more important than the revival of the Anti-Subversion Law, adding that it was an issue that would "spawn a lot of controversy and debate."

"I'd like to think about it very well," Teodoro told reporters when asked if he would support the revival of Republic Act No. 1700, which was repealed in 1992 to pave the way for the government's peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

"To me, as secretary of national defense, equally important or more important, is the means to enforce the law, meaning to say, our fill-up rate in terms of personnel and our modernization and capability upgrade," he said.

The defense chief admitted that with such a law, the Armed Forces and the police would have an easier time addressing the insurgency problem. "But would the body politic want it? That's another question," he said.

The idea of Rep. Jose Solis of Sorsogon, an NPA-infested province, to revive the Anti-Subversion Law to stamp out the country's decades-old insurgency problem was initially supported by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

But Malacañang quickly backtracked on the law's revival after it encountered vehement protests from lawmakers, human rights victims and civil liberty advocates.

Retrogressive

Senate President Manuel Villar said the Senate would shut down any bill that would revive the Anti-Subversion Law even if the President supported it.

"Most of the senators are against it. There is no place for it in the present time," Villar told reporters in Iloilo City on Sunday before he opened the Iwag Festival in Pototan.

"Reviving RA 1700 is retrogressive. It is like going back to the primitive years when we labeled people as communists and insurgents. It will be a throwback to the Jurassic era when mere membership in a group was grounds for punishment when what should be sanctioned are overt illegal acts and not mere organizational affiliation," Villar said later in a statement.

Deputy Minority Leader and Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, who went underground during martial law, yesterday said the revival of the Anti-Subversion Law would not solve the insurgency problem.

Ocampo warned that it would only lead to "massive warrantless arrests, search and seizures, illegal detention, and worsen the sorry state of human rights in the country."

Not the way to go

Speaker Jose de Venecia expressed his categorical opposition to the President's plan, saying it was not the way to solve the decades-old communist insurgency in the country.

"I am against the revival of the Anti-Subversion Law," he told reporters in a press conference.

De Venecia, who had been at odds with the President over the recent broadband network scandal, said he was instead supporting her amnesty proclamation covering the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The Speaker said using the Anti-Subversion Law to crush insurgency would only drive Leftist groups from the "parliamentary process." So far in the Philippines, at least six congressmen identified with the Left have brought their struggle inside the walls of parliament.

Two-edged sword

Reviving the Anti-Subversion Law at this time would not greatly help the government in its campaign to end the communist insurgency, according to Jesuit priest Fr. Romeo Intengan, cofounder of the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas, which has links to National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales.

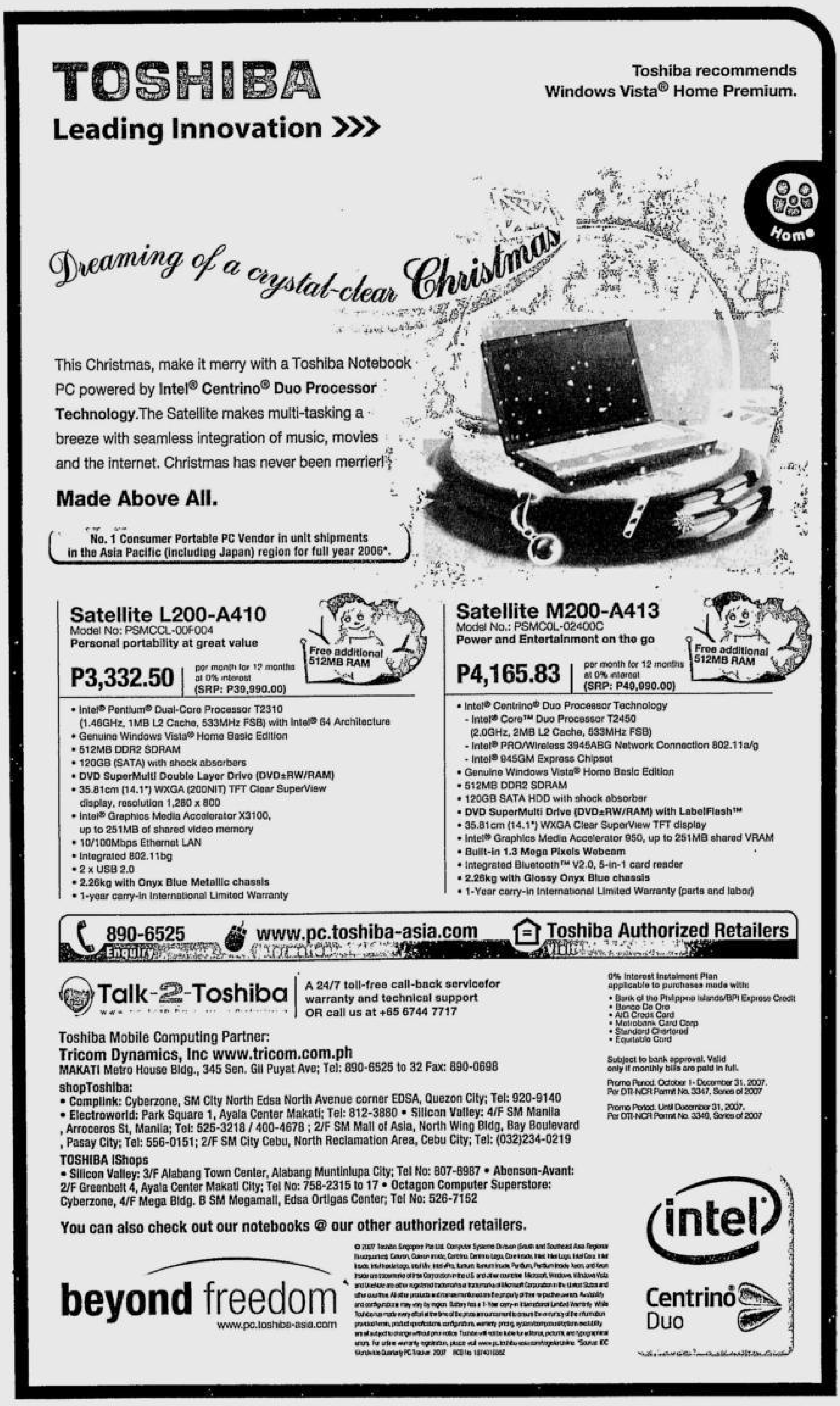
Intengan, in a statement, said: "A law like RA 1700 by itself is a two-edged sword. It will be helpful only if government political and military intelligence is excellent, if police investigators, state prosecutors and judges are sufficiently competent and courageous, and the citizenry is cooperative. Otherwise, the CPP will simply go underground and set up new front organizations and economic conduits harder to detect than before."

OTHER NEWS

TOP COPS who took back Peninsula hotel get medals
/A9

4 CIVILIANS arrested in Pen siege file raps vs police
/A9

ENVIRONMENTAL projects to get funds after Bali
/A6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Toshiba recommends Windows Vista® Home Premium.

Home

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PAF needs new planes – fast

By Tarra Quismundo

IT'S TIME TO RETIRE THE PHILIPPINE Air Force's fleet of Vietnam War-era OV-10 Broncos as at the rate the twin-propeller aircraft are crashing, the PAF may have no planes left in six years.

Lt. Gen. Horacio Tolentino, PAF commanding general, said the government must acquire new aircraft to replace the aged fleet of Broncos, citing their two-per-year attrition rate.

"Based on the trending, for any cause, we lose two of these aircraft per year. That means we might run out of OV-10s in six years," Tolentino said.

He said the PAF had been having a hard time finding spare parts for its Broncos, which are maintained by the 15th Strike Wing based at Danilo Atienza Air Base in Sangley Point, Cavite.

The OV-10s are American-made turboprops acquired by the PAF in 1992. At one time, the air forces of the United States, Venezuela, Thailand and Indonesia used them.

The PAF has been using the versatile planes on combat missions, mostly in Mindanao, where government forces have been battling Moro and communist insurgents.

The Bronco is suitable for such operations as it can fly at just the right speed for accurate bomb drops, Tolentino said.

"I am not recommending any particular plane to replace it, but it is our position that it is time to replace the [Bronco]. We have long conducted a study on the possible aircraft to replace it," Tolentino said, without giving specifics.

The PAF chief said a plane with "more or less the same capabilities" as the Bronco should be acquired in its place.

"The plane should also be a turbo-prop with about the same speed range as the OV-10, around 250 knots, so that it could maneuver to lower altitudes and the delivery [of bombs] will be more accurate," he said.

The PAF chief said he would prefer a plane equipped with laser-guided munitions.

Ball in gov't's court, says MILF of aborted peace talks

THE SEPARATIST MORO ISLAMIC LIBERation Front (MILF) said yesterday it will not return to the peace talks unless the government honors a previous pledge to create a new Muslim homeland in the south, the rebels' chief negotiator said yesterday.

The Malaysian-brokered peace talks between the government and the Mindanao-based MILF were cancelled over the weekend in Kuala Lumpur after a dispute over the need for congressional approval of a draft agreement on ancestral territory.

The agreement prepared by the government panel reportedly said that an MILF homeland in Mindanao would have to pass through a "constitutional process," something earlier drafts did not mention.

"We were shocked to find so many new elements in the draft shown to us," Mohaqher Iqbal, the chief negotiator for the MILF, told Reuters by phone from Kuala Lumpur.

"There will be no more talks unless the government shows us a draft that reflects what our two sides had already agreed upon in the three years of negotiations on the ancestral domain issue."

The MILF fears that if any deal is sent to Congress it will be watered down, which was what happened to the 1996 peace agreement with a rival rebel group, the Moro National Liberation Front.

The row was the latest in a long line of setbacks to peace in Mindanao, where Moro rebels have been fighting for decades for some measure of independence in a conflict that has killed over 120,000 people.

"The ball is entirely in the government's hands," Iqbal said. "If they will stick to the consensus points we had agreed on in the past three years, we'll sit down with them anytime."

Sensitive issues

Jesus Dureza, President Macapagal-Arroyo's adviser on the peace process, told Reuters that a mutually acceptable deal could still be reached next year but he signaled that the government would not budge on the need for congressional approval.

"We don't want to deceive the MILF that everything is okay because we're dealing with very sensitive issues and we can't negotiate with them outside the constitutional framework."

The government peace panel led by chief negotiator Rodolfo Garcia, is expected to report to Malacañang today on the latest snag in the peace talks.

Dureza said the panel would be able to handle the situation. But he reiterated in a phone interview with the INQUIRER that President Arroyo was "determined to firm up a conprehensive agreement with the MILF." *Reuters; Christine O. Avendano; Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao*

House, Senate begin bicam talks on ₱1-T 2008 budget

THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES yesterday started the process of reconciling each chamber's version of the country's first trillion-peso budget before Congress goes on recess for the holidays on Thursday.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, chair of the House committee on appropriations, said he was confident "an agreement in principle" could be reached by the two houses before the break.

The deliberations on the 2008 budget had been one of the fastest in recent times, with the House approving its version on second reading before the recess in October.

"I'm confident that we will be able to pass it in the shortest possible time," Lagman said in a telephone interview after the Senate and House panels met in the bicameral conference committee on the 2008 budget.

"The problems are more technical than substantial," he said, referring to the printing of the bicameral committee report and the reconciled version of the General Appropriations Bill before it is ratified by the two houses of Congress and signed into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Among the differences between the Senate and House versions of the budget bill is the amount cut from allocations for debt interest payments.

No cause for concern

"That's not a cause for concern. The Senate has adopted the House special provision on suspending debt interest payments for loans that are challenged as fraudulent," Lagman said.

The House, in its version of the budget, slashed P17.8 billion from debt interest payments and realigned the funds to social services, including a P4.7-billion hike in the Department of Health budget.

The Senate, however, restored P12.1 billion for debt interest payments when it tackled the budget. It only inserted a special provision that would allow further reduction in debt interest payment allocations subject to a stronger peso exchange rate.

"Hopefully, we can agree on realigning to social services the savings on the debt service as a consequence of the continuing appreciation of the peso vis-a-vis the dollar," Lagman said in his opening statement before the bicameral conference committee.

He said allocations of P5 billion for interest payments of loans to fund projected programs still in the pipeline must also be expunged from the executive branch's budget.

"We must not immobilize precious funds which cannot be utilized during the fiscal year," Lagman said.

He cited three commonalities between the Senate and House versions.

Lagman said both versions maintained the budgetary ceiling recommended in the Executive's National Expenditure Program of P1.227-trillion and excised certain allocations to augment basic services. And for the first time since 1999, there were cuts in the debt service payments. *Norman Bordadora*

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House passes meds bill

THE HOUSE OF Representatives has approved on second reading the bill promising lower priced medicines in the country.

In a voice vote, majority of the 240-strong chamber last night overcame the series of objections of an administration lawmaker and passed House Bill No. 2844.

"This will disprove the notion that there is a strong lobby against the measure," Speaker Jose de Venecia said. "The people's interest has clearly prevailed."

Majority Leader Arthur Defensor said the bill would be passed on third and final reading this afternoon, or two days before Congress goes on holiday break.

"It's good as done," Defensor told the INQUIRER.

Next stop for the cheaper medicines bill is the bicameral conference committee where it would be reconciled with the Senate version. *Christian V. Esguerra*

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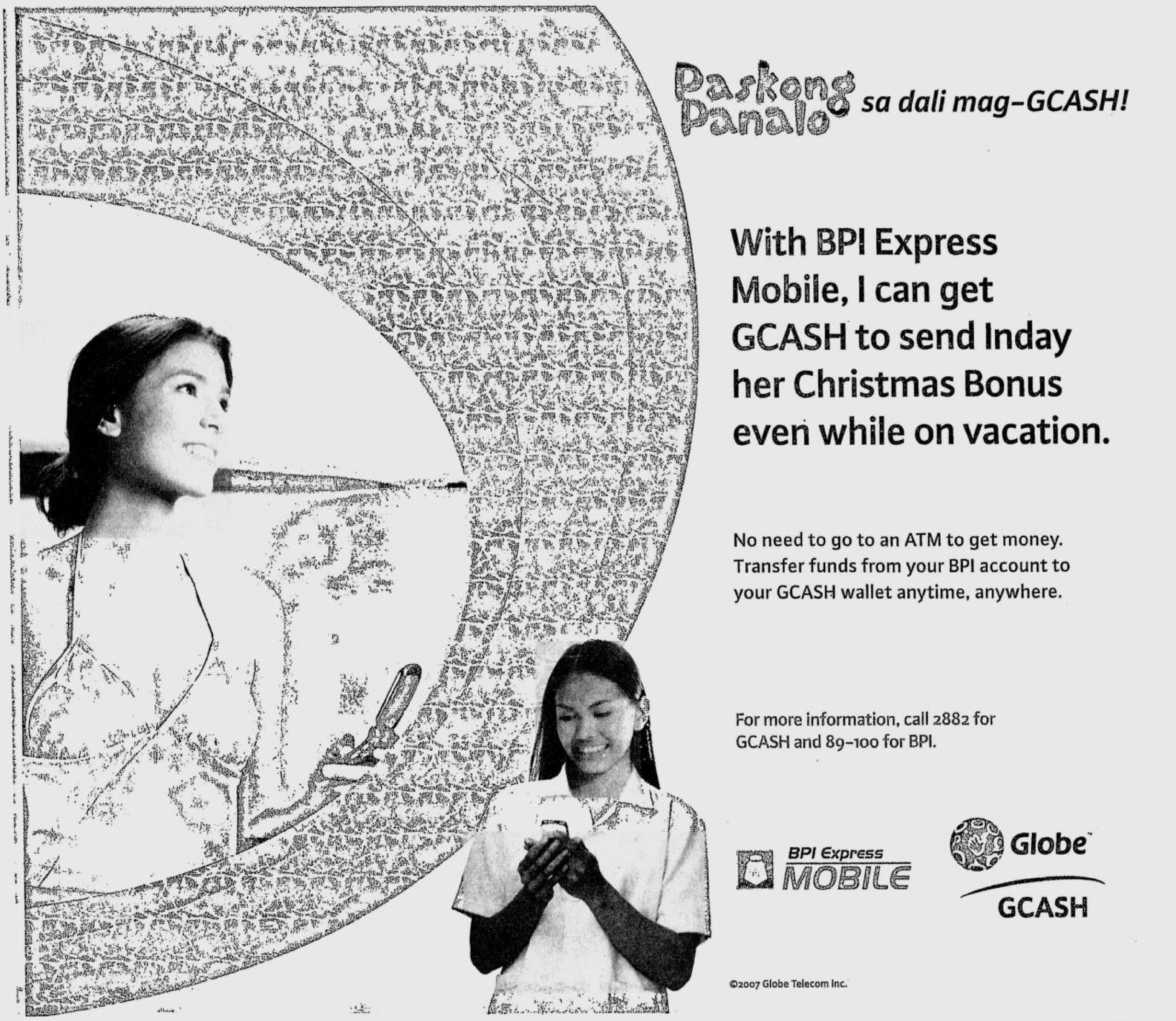

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RP eco projects to get funds after Bali

By TJ Burgonio

A HOST OF PHILIPPINE ENVIRONMENTAL projects will finally get funding after world leaders agreed to operationalize a $67-million adaptation fund under the Kyoto Protocol at the recent climate conference in Bali, Indonesia.

"Our gain is that [we have] succeeded in getting developing countries considered for more funding to protect ourselves from the negative effects of climate change," Environment Secretary Lito Atienza told reporters yesterday.

Atienza, who led the Philippine delegation to the Bali meet, said the country's clean development mechanism (CDM) projects would benefit from the operationalization of the fund that has been idle since 1997.

"There would be more funds to be expected for our programs to address the destructive effects of climate change," he said.

The adaptation fund, designed to finance concrete adaptation programs in developing countries that are parties to the Protocol, has been unused since 1997. It's held by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

According to Atienza, a board will be created to draw up the terms for the allocation of the fund to developing countries.

Among the Philippine CDM projects in the pipeline are a biogas emission reduction project from a garbage facility, hydropower energy project, reforestation and projects utilizing renewable energy and methane recovery.

The CDM is a mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol which helps developed countries achieve their emissions reduction targets, and developing countries attain their sustainable development goals.

The Protocol is an international and legally binding agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions worldwide.

The CDM allows developing countries to source capital and expertise from rich countries to fund environmental programs such as reforestation, establishment of fuel crops, solid waste management and the development of alternative sources of energy like windmills and solar power.

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Strategic Project Analyst
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The Economic Benefits of SMFI's Agro-Industrial Project

San Miguel Foods, Inc.'s (SMFI) P2.4 billion investment will contribute immensely to the people of Sumilao and Bukidnon Province.

✔ **Improvement in Basic Services**

- Government's Tax revenues is estimated to increase 30- fold (from P3.3 million to P98 million) when the project is fully operational
- Higher Tax Revenue = Improved delivery of Basic Services

✔ **Gainful Employment & Higher Farm Income**

- The agro-industrial project is envisioned to generate employment to at least 2,400 workers and the facility will require 400 personnel with an estimated annual payroll cost of P50 million.
- As SMFI partners with more farmers, they will gain access to financing (farm inputs and planting materials) which will result in better farm productivity and higher pricing.
- Higher corn prices = Increase in farm incomes

Why stop this project when all the basic infrastructure (21 buildings and basic utilities) are already in place?

There are at least 46,000 hectares of idle Government land in the area that can be distributed to the farmers and developed together with SMFI.

The table below quantifies the magnitude of progress that can benefit not only a few but the greater majority of Bukidnon:

AGRO-INDUSTRIAL PROJECT AT A GLANCE

	2008-2017 (Forecast)	On Full Operations
Amounts in Peso Million		
Tax Payments*	16.3	2.3
Labor Related Expenses	347	50
Corporate Income Taxes	668	96
Power Bill	637	90
Value of Material Purchases	4,249	611
Volume of commodity purchases (Metric Ton)		
Corn purchases	173,846	25,000
Rice Bran purchases	86,784	12,480
Cassava purchases	168,122	25,000
Molasses purchases	43,392	6,240

** Real Property Tax, Business Taxes*

FACTS & FIGURES

✔ SUMILAO ANNUAL TAX REVENUES = P3.3million

✔ SUMILAO SPENDS P5.8million FOR BASIC SERVICES*

Income & Expenditure	Bukidnon	Sumilao
Income Source		
Tax Revenue	35.6	3.3
Non-Tax (inc. borrowings)	169.9	2.4
Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA)	512.5	23.3
Total Revenues	**718.1**	**29.0**
Expenses		
Administrative	223	14.3
Education	25	0.4 *
Health services	295	1.6 *
Housing	1	- *
Social services	4	0.8 *
Economic services	98	3.0 *
Debt service	11	-
Others	117	4.4
Total Expenses	**774.9**	**24.0**

Source: Department of Interior and Local Government, 2004. Amounts in Peso Million.

TAX INDICATORS

	Bukidnon	Sumilao
Land Area (has)	829,378	20,749
Population*	1,244,586	21,723
Household*	236,821	3,953
Tax Revenue per capita (P)	29	152
Gov't Expenditure per capita (P)	623	1,105
Deficit per Capita (P)	(594)	(953)
IRA as % of Revenues	71.4%	80.3%

*Source: * Population & Household figures are 2004 estimates from 2000 census; Basic Services exclude Admin expenses*

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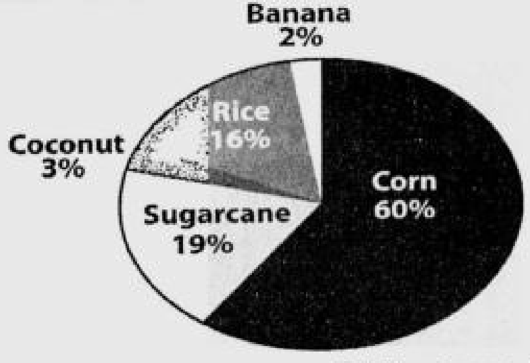

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Source: Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, 2005

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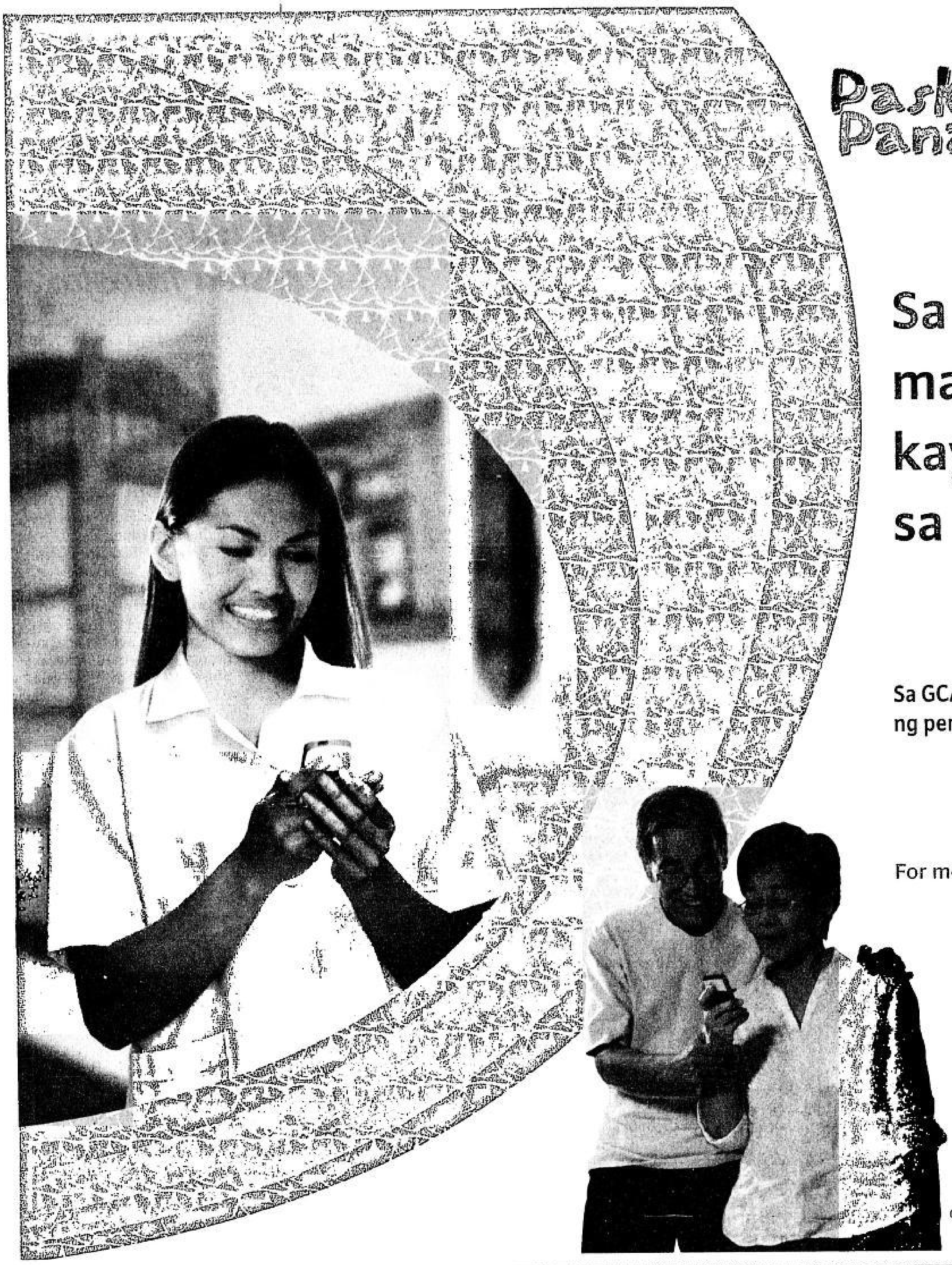

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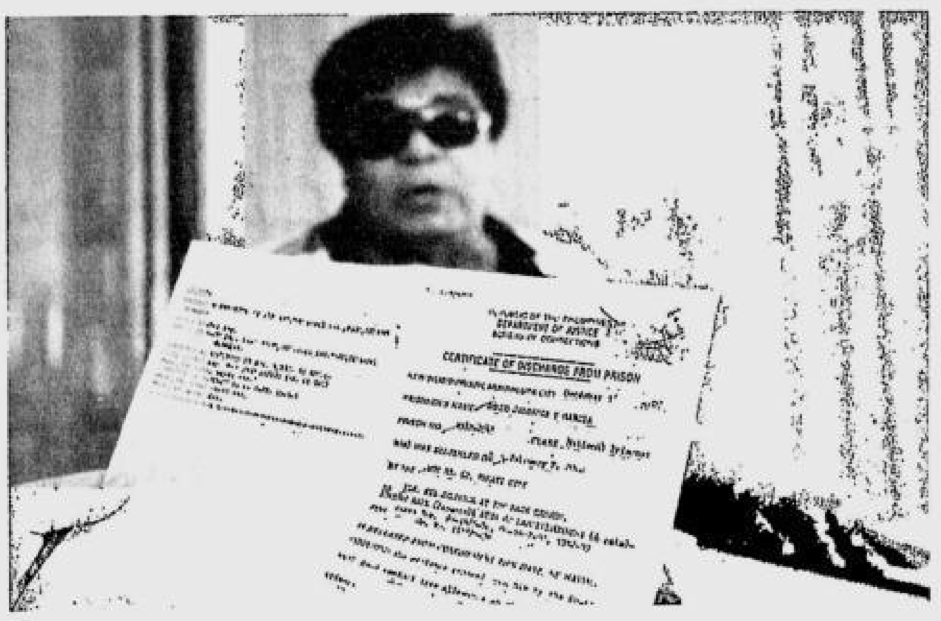
Church asks gov't: Focus on other elderly prisoners

From page A1

victed of the murder of former Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. The two were recently granted executive clemency by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Prison officials had issued a discharge order to Jalosjos, who will turn 70 in 2010, for his release on Sunday, but the DOJ intervened, saying that Ms Arroyo was "upset" by the decision and that he was eligible for release in April 2009 based on a "recomputation" of the time left on his sentence.

Jalosjos received two life terms in 1997 for raping an 11-year-old girl but Ms Arroyo commuted his sentence to 16 years in April.



IS HE IN OR OUT? **Former Congressman Romeo Jalosjos stays where he is and answers questions from the media at the New Bilibid Prisons tennis club in Muntinlupa City on Monday.** EDWIN BACASMAS

No to pardon

Several senators are also opposed to a presidential pardon for Jalosjos.

"Let's wait until he turns 70 years old. For the sake of the victim, he should stay in jail a little longer," said Sen. Jinggoy Estrada in Filipino.

Sen. Pia Cayetano assailed the DOJ's "poor" conviction rate for rapists and child abusers.

"If anything, the conflicting statements indicate a sly attempt to rush his (Jalosjos') release for political expediency," she said.

Sen. Benigno Aquino III said Malacañang failed to "equally" apply its policy of granting parole to convicts who had turned 70 years old while in prison. He cited the case of Dolores Baguio Sr., 92, who is serving a sentence for murder.

"Why prioritize Jalosjos? How come the others who fall under the age criteria have not been released?" Aquino said in Filipino. "I have long stopped trying to understand how the President's mind works."

Estrada resented insinuations that the presidential pardon granted his father could lead to a similar clemency for Jalosjos. "They're both criminal cases. But my father's case was political in nature. My father did not commit rape," he said in Filipino.

List of old inmates

Bishop Arigo said he had asked for a list of old inmates after officiating Mass at the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa City and the Women's Correctional in Mandaluyong City, in observance of Prison Awareness Week in October.

The ECPPC list showed that 83 of the 122 convicts, who were eligible for pardon after reaching the age of 70 years and still languishing in jails nationwide, were being held at the NBP, 18 at the Davao Prison and Penal Farm. nine at the Women's Correctional, nine at the Leyte regional prison, two at the San Ramon Prison and Penal Farm in Zamboanga City, and one at the Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm in Palawan.

ECPPC executive secretary Rodolfo Diamante said the list was submitted to the Bureau of Corrections and forwarded to the Bureau of Pardons and Parole.

Agnes Devanadera, who was then acting justice secretary, had asked for the list following Arigo's statement on Ms Arroyo's grant of a pardon to Estrada, he said.

Humanitarian reasons

Arigo said in the radio interview that his office was seeking a case review for humanitarian reasons because the elderly prisoners were presumed to have reached the point of becoming "more sober."

"When we become older, we change. We become wiser and more sober," he said.

Besides, Arigo said, the review could also help decongest prisons.

The bishop stressed that the Church, through the ECPPC, had always called for a "restorative" kind of justice, not just "retributive." If, according to a case evaluation, he or she has been shown to be reformed and that the safety of others will not be threatened by his or her release, the prisoner can already benefit from executive clemency, Arigo said.

A women's group called on Jalosjos to first "show remorse" before even thinking of walking out of prison.

"He should first show that he is sorry, that there is remorse for what he did. He is even arrogant," Gabriela secretary general Emmi de Jesus said in a phone interview.

She also called for a review in the justice system, particularly meting out punishment to high-profile government figures.

"We should rethink about the punishment given to persons of power, economic or otherwise. The politics of patronage is too much," she said. *With reports from Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Julie M. Aurelio*

Esperon led group that arrested Jalosjos

By Nikko Dizon

IT'S ALL COMING BACK TO Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

After all, it was the Armed Forces chief of staff, then a colonel assigned as the deputy commander of the Presidential Security Group (PSG), who led the group that arrested then Congressman Romeo Jalosjos in January 1997 in Bataan.

President Fidel Ramos had ordered a manhunt for Jalosjos after the Zamboanga del Norte lawmaker was accused of raping a minor.

Esperon recalled there was a chase from Batangas to Bataan.

"The memories of how we arrested Jalosjos are coming back to me," he said in Filipino.

"I used three watercraft, one maneuvering to the right, one maneuvering to the left. I was the one in the middle ... They (Jalosjos' men) had guns, but we were able to corner them."

Esperon said there could have been a lot of casualties in that operation.

Considering that the punishment meted on Jalosjos was double life imprisonment, Esperon said he wondered why Jalosjos was going to be freed.

"But if it's within the authority of the pardoning authority, then so be it," he said.

'I'm a free man, I'm not a prisoner anymore'

From page A1

the time Jalosjos has served, he will be entitled to freedom only in April 2009.

The former congressman from Zamboanga del Norte disputes that.

"I'm a free man, I'm not a prisoner anymore," he said in an interview at the NBP tennis court on the 300-hectare prison reservation.

"I don't believe that the Bureau of Corrections could have erred after so many years of computing," he said.

Still around

Jalosjos expressed confidence that after the DOJ rechecked its figures, his original date of discharge—Dec. 16—would turn out to be correct.

During the interview, Jalosjos tried to give the impression that he was staying on the reservation of his own volition.

"They asked if I could stay, I said yes. I'm confident the original computation is legal, proper and correct," he said.

Jalosjos said he was now on "living out" status, which allows him to roam the reservation.

He is, however, required to report to prison officers at 4 a.m. and 5 p.m. every day to assure them he is still around.

Mark of a visitor

Jalosjos had just come from attending Mass inside the maximum security compound when the INQUIRER caught up with him at the tennis court.

He sported a visitor's stamp on his left wrist—which he said was proof that he was not a prisoner anymore.

The NBP chaplain, Fr. Robert Olaguer, said that Jalosjos had been on living-out status since his sentence was commuted.

Aside from a nipa hut he shares with two other inmates inside the minimum security facility, Jalosjos said he had other living quarters on the reservation, including a resthouse in Katarungan Village on its outskirts.

A visit to Saguisag

Had the DOJ not prevented his release, Jalosjos said he had planned to visit lawyer Rene Saguisag, who is recuperating from a car accident in Makati last month.

"I had even booked a ticket with Philippine Airlines so I could go home to Dipolog on Thursday," he said.

In the meantime, he said, he would remain on the reservation—not as a prisoner but as a "free man, a visitor."

"Until a court questions the discharge order, it is still valid," he added.

No favoritism

Asked what case he would file against the DOJ if it refused to release him, Jalosjos said: "To ask them to respect the release order of the BuCor (Bureau of Corrections)."

Asked to comment on Jalosjos' threat to sue, Gonzalez said there was nothing he could do about it but added he would face such a suit.

Gonzalez reiterated that a December release for Jalosjos could not be implemented because the President would not agree to it. He also said that by the DOJ's computation, Jalosjos could only be released in 2009.

"In the first place, the President would not allow it," Gonzalez said. "He can't be released this December."

Asked why he chose to stay on the reservation despite his being "free," Jalosjos said he preferred to submit himself to the courts.

Vinarao's count

"Why would I risk a confrontation? It will only take a few days to recompute so I came back. Any confrontation can be problematic," he said.

A BuCor insider said Jalosjos was, indeed, able to leave prison on Sunday after he got his discharge order, contrary to the DOJ's claims that he never got out.

The insider, who asked for anonymity, said Jalosjos was even able to go to his house in Katarungan Village before he decided to go back to the NBP.

BuCor Director Ricardo Dapat has said the village is still part of the NBP reservation.

The prison source said that Dapat implemented Sunday's discharge because he agreed with former BuCor Director Vicente Vinarao's computation of Jalosjos' remaining time inside prison, which would pave the way for his release on Sunday.

Dapat and NBP head Supt. Juanito Leopando could not be reached for comment yesterday. *With a report from Leila B. Salaverria*

GMA heeded public clamor, says Palace

From page A1

that it was also not true that "the President is siding with (Jalosjos)."

Malacañang blamed "miscommunication" for the confusion surrounding the decision by prison authorities to give Jalosjos a discharge order, and said it was not inclined to punish Bureau of Corrections Director Ricardo Dapat and New Bilibid Prisons head Supt. Juanito Leopando.

It was Leopando who signed the discharge order and it was Dapat who told the media Saturday night that the ex-lawmaker would be released the following day.

Apostol said Jalosjos was not eligible for early release despite the commutation of his sentence.

"(Any decision to release him) has to go through officials of the Bureau of Pardons and Parole for them to evaluate, and later on, for the BPP and the secretary of justice to recommend his release to the President," he said.

Apostol also said that Jalosjos, 66, was not qualified for a pardon since he had yet to reach the age of 70.

Manero due for release

Also yesterday, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said that Norberto Manero, who was convicted of killing Italian priest Tullio Favali in 1985 and sentenced to life imprisonment, was set to be released in January next year.

He said Manero, who is ill, was entitled to be released based on time served. If the prisoner is not released, that could be considered arbitrary detention, Gonzalez said.

Asked if the release would push through, he said: "I suppose so."

On Jalosjos, Gonzalez said the Department of Justice was looking into the validity of claims that the time credits granted Jalosjos entitled him to be released this month.

GMA's policy

Gonzalez said he wanted to find out whether the time credits given Jalosjos for serving as prison adviser and for doing labor were valid, and whether he could have been released without the justice secretary's knowledge.

Gonzalez said that by the DOJ's computation, Jalosjos should be released in April 2009, although he had directed the chief state counsel to review the computation.

But even if Jalosjos could be freed by 2009, he said Ms Arroyo wanted her policy of releasing 70-year-old prisoners, under Administrative Order No. 155, to prevail.

Jalosjos turns 70 in 2010.

Cruel joke

Two administration senators criticized Malacañang for playing a "cruel joke" on Jalosjos.

Sen. Richard Gordon blamed Ms Arroyo's grant of executive clemency to former President Joseph Estrada for the uproar caused by the aborted release of Jalosjos.

"I fault the President for pardoning former President Estrada because it would open all kinds of door, because everybody would now ask for it. You can't give one without giving to another," Gordon told reporters.

"I am faulting her. I believed Jalosjos was just used as a test case, his case was flown like a kite and immediately cut off due to the bad public reception."

Highly unusual

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago found Jalosjos' case "bizarre."

"This is highly unusual that there were certain documents purporting to authorize the release of a convict and then the highest authorizing person, the President, denied any veracity to the release of the convict," Santiago said.

"In the first place, in constitutional terms, the power to extend executive clemency belongs completely to the President and is completely discretionary. If she wants to grant it, she can. If the order has not yet been implemented or executed she can withdraw. But in this case, the President is saying that she never issued an order," the senator said.

For Santiago, the main question was where Jalosjos' documents came from.

Senate President Manny Villar, for his part, told reporters in Filipino: "I don't know why the President keeps changing her mind . . . We should avoid situations like this because it is not fair to the man." *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Tina G. Santos*

Malacañang downplays GMA checkup

From page A1

Poblador, said Ms Arroyo went to St. Luke's because she had been coughing and was beginning to lose her voice and wanted doctors to run tests on her throat.

"It's nothing and now she's back in the Palace," Poblador said. She said Ms Arroyo was at St. Luke's for 40 minutes.

Christine Liwanag, St. Luke's communications officer, told the INQUIRER on Sunday that she had no authority to speak on the matter.

But when she asked St. Luke's president Jose Ledesma if any procedures were done on Ms Arroyo, Ledesma had answered, "No."

Hospitalized twice in 2006

The President was hospitalized twice in 2006—in June and July—for diarrhea and a fever, respectively.

During her July visit, doctors who did not want to be identified because of the sensitivity of the matter, said Ms Arroyo was suffering from a fatty liver.

Prior to her "routine checkup" on Sunday, the President last went to the hospital in November when she accompanied her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, for an executive medical checkup as a follow-up to the latter's heart surgery.

But a source told the INQUIRER that the President also had an executive checkup.

Busy day

As if to douse speculation that she was ill, Ms Arroyo was up and about yesterday and went ahead with her schedule. She appeared relaxed and animated sometimes. Her voice was not as hoarse as it was late last week.

In her trademark Marian blue pantsuit, Ms Arroyo had another busy day yesterday, attending a breastfeeding conference at the Manila Hotel where she gave a speech.

From Manila Hotel, she went to a sports complex in Malibay, Pasay City, to distribute, among other things, permits that would allow some residents to put up stores selling affordable rice and other food items.

Meeting with farmers

Back in Malacañang, Ms Arroyo hosted a luncheon meeting with farmers from Sumilao, Bukidnon, that lasted more than an hour.

The President was expected to end her day by attending the oath-taking and dinner for newly elected officials of the Malacañang League of Barangays.

Speaking to reporters, Bunye said that Ms Arroyo probably went to see the doctor because of her hoarse voice.

"You notice during the party that she tendered in your honor she had a very hoarse voice. Maybe she wanted to have a checkup...," the presidential spokesperson said.

Christmas party

Bunye was referring to the Christmas party that Ms Arroyo hosted in Malacañang on Friday for reporters, photographers and Palace media staff members and their families.

Ms Arroyo's raspy voice was first noticed when she made a speech at a peace assembly in Masbate on Dec. 13.

Her voice was still hoarse when she delivered yet another speech during a convention of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines in Quezon City the following day.

Bunye said the President's trip to the hospital "did not prevent her from attending her duties as scheduled."

"I don't think that whatever she was feeling prevented her from doing her scheduled activities," he said. *With a report from Nikko Dizon*

Police officers who took back Peninsula hotel get medals

By Alcuin Papa

THE POLICE TEAM THAT FORCED the surrender of Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and their cohorts who took over the Peninsula Manila hotel on Nov. 29 were awarded medals yesterday by the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Philippine National Police.

Despite criticism for the way they handled the arrest of media members and civilians during the siege of the hotel in Makati City, a total of 26 medals was given to the officers of different ranks in rites held yesterday in Camp Crame. Leading the list were Director Geary Barias, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office; Chief Supt. Luizo Ticman, head of the Southern Police District; Chief Supt. Leocadio Santiago, head of the Special Action Force, and Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-National Capital Region chief Senior Supt. Asher Dolina.

Barias, Ticman and Santiago received the PNP's Medalya ng Kabayanihan from Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and PNP Director General Avelino Razon. Dolina was awarded the Medalya ng Kadakilaan. The medals were in recognition of the work done by Barias, Ticman, Dolina and other officers in investigating the Glorietta blast and the Batasan bombing.

Razon also said the awards were in recognition of the fact that there were no casualties during the Peninsula Manila siege. "We were able to resolve the situation within the day. So we credit that to the professional work given by our police."

With a report by Nikko Dizon

TICMAN, BARIAS at the rites: Who's laughing now? JOAN BONDOC

4 civilians nabbed at Pen charge cops

IT'S PAYBACK TIME FOR FOUR civilians the Philippine National Police arrested in the aftermath of the takeover of the Peninsula Manila hotel in Makati City on Nov. 29.

Lawyers Argee Guevarra and JV Bautista, Fr. Robert Reyes and retired Navy Capt. Julian Advincula filed criminal and administrative complaints against two police officers for arbitrary detention, violation of the law and abuse of authority in the Office of the Ombudsman yesterday.

Charged were National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Director Geary Barias, the ground commander of the police assault to take back the hotel, and Senior Supt. Asher Dolina, chief of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

"We are going to fight back. We are not going to take this sitting down. We were unreasonably arrested and detained," Bautista told reporters.

The four were among the 51 renegade soldiers and private individuals who were arrested at the hotel where Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV called anew for the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

They spent 14 days in CIDG custody at Camp Crame in Quezon City before being released on orders of the Makati Regional Trial Court which found no probable cause to charge them with rebellion.

In their 3-page complaint, the four recounted that after the police assaulted the hotel, they were handcuffed and herded—along with members of the media covering the incident—to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City.

"We were fingerprinted and all our personal belongings, like cellular phones, wallets, identification cards, monies, were confiscated and we were placed under detention without proper notification as to what crime we were arrested for," they said.

It was only on their fourth day of confinement, which they pointed out was beyond the maximum 36-hour period they could be held without arrest warrants, that they received a Department of Justice resolution informing them they were being charged with rebellion.

Jocelyn R. Uy

Wider coverage for Schengen visa

HOLDERS OF THE SCHENGEN VISA, A collective permit to enter 15 European countries, will be able to travel to nine additional countries beginning Dec. 21.

In an advisory to Filipinos travelling to Europe, the Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday said the additional countries are Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

These countries will join the 15 other Schengen States, namely, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Iceland and Norway.

The DFA advisory, however, said the relaxation of passport controls in the nine countries would only cover land border crossings and seaports. For airports and air travel, the relaxation of controls will begin on March 30, 2008.

Cynthia D. Balana

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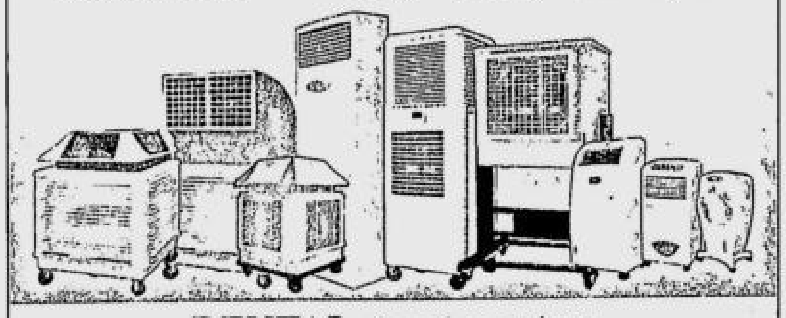

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CPP-NPA rejects truce; AFP vows to hunt rebels

From page A1

He also dismissed Esperon's proposal for a three-year ceasefire to allow the resumption of stalled peace talks.

"Who in his right mind will believe General Esperon when all along he has been saber-rattling and prating that the AFP can decimate the revolutionary armed forces by 2009? He is the least credible person to make the slightest gesture toward peace," said Rosal.

Some 20 guerrillas of the communist New People's Army believed to be led by a certain Glenn de la Cruz (alias Glenn Silagan) were allegedly behind the ambush of the three Marine recruits in Taytay town in northern Palawan, hours after the ceasefire took effect on Sunday.

The soldiers, unarmed and in civilian clothes, were on their way to market on foot when they were killed.

Esperon said the government declared the cessation of military operations not only in observance of the Yuletide season but also for everyone "to feel the difference between violence and peace." The ceasefire, which began on Dec. 16, ends midnight of Jan. 6, 2008.

"So if that's (violence) what the NPA wants, the NPA's really like that because they are terrorists," Esperon said. He described members of the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) as "outlaws."

Anti-Subversion Law

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Starting Jan. 1, water to cost more in Metro

From page A1

age water rate will be reduced to P31.66 per cubic meter starting Jan. 1 from the current P32.99, according to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System-Regulatory Office.

Maynilad Water Services Inc. is the private concessionaire in the west zone.

MWSS chief Alberto Agra said the new water rates of MWCI would help finance the publicly listed firm's planned P187-billion capital investment and operational expenditure program over the next 15 years.

The MWSS-RO approved on Dec. 14 MWCI's new tariff adjustment, raising its average all-in water tariff to P33.42 per cubic meter from P20.54.

The tariff adjustment, however, will be spread out within the next five years—from 2008 to 2012.

Four customer types

Average all-in tariff refers to the mean of all the tariffs plus add-on costs related to Manila Water's four customer types—residential, semi-business, commercial and industrial.

For 2008, Agra said the average tariff increase would be P5 per cubic meter.

Due to a socialized pricing structure, residential customers, which consume less water, will only have to pay for a fraction of this amount, according to Agra.

Thus, households with a monthly 30-cubic-meter consumption will pay an additional P2.08 per cubic meter.

By 2009, these households will pay a rate increase of P1.88 a day. Every year from 2010 to 2012, the water rates will likely increase by P1.77 a day.

Residential customers consuming 15 cubic meters monthly, will pay even less, just an additional P0.56 a day, according to Agra. This will bring their monthly bills to P141 from the current P125.

For these small customers, the price increase for 2009 will be P0.65 a day, and P0.63 a day for the remaining three years.

MWCI president Antonino Aquino said the new water rates would have different impact on customers.

19-to 28-percent increase

The increase for the residential group, which accounts for almost 85 percent of MWCI's customers, will be an average 19 percent.

For the business or commercial group, it's 20 percent and the industrial group, 28 percent.

In January, commercial customers consuming 100 cubic meters monthly will have to pay P3,958.34, up P873.36 from the current P3,084.98.

Industrial customers consuming 200 cubic meters monthly will have to pay P1,927 more than their current bill of P6,734.06.

Rate rebasing

At a press briefing, Agra said this was the second rate rebasing period for the Ayala-owned water concessionaire.

"Rate rebasing is a process done every five years by the MWSS and MWCI to update the service improvement plan for customers and evaluate the required capital investment in the near future," the MWSS chief said.

Agra said there would be no rate rebasing for Maynilad Water because it was under rehabilitation.

MWCI's P187-billion service improvement plan "aims to provide 24-hour water supply to customers, mitigate the effects of natural calamities, and expand water and wastewater services in the east zone," Aquino said.

He said the tariff increase would also ensure water supply reliability in the east zone.

Aquino earlier said that the firm would look for new water sources aside from Angat Dam in Bulacan province from where Metro Manila gets 97 percent of its water supply, repair, rehabilitate and lay down pipes to avoid leaks, and expand its wastewater program.

Expanding service

The company is currently expanding its service in Taguig, Antipolo, San Mateo, Rodriguez, Cainta, Taytay and Angono.

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Further service improvement and rehabilitation projects are also being undertaken in areas with 100-percent water coverage, including the southeastern part of Quezon City, Mandaluyong, San Juan, Marikina, Pasig, Pateros, the San Andres and Sta. Ana areas of Manila, and the portion of Makati east of the South Super Highway.

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It is building septic treatment plants in San Mateo town in Rizal, Pinugay in Antipolo City and at the Food Terminal Complex in Taguig City, Aquino said.

CPP-NPA rejects truce; AFP vows to hunt rebels

From page A1

He also dismissed Esperon's proposal for a three-year ceasefire to allow the resumption of stalled peace talks.

"Who in his right mind will believe General Esperon when all along he has been saber-rattling and prating that the AFP can decimate the revolutionary armed forces by 2009? He is the least credible person to make the slightest gesture toward peace," said Rosal.

Some 20 guerrillas of the communist New People's Army believed to be led by a certain Glenn de la Cruz (alias Glenn Silagan) were allegedly behind the ambush of the three Marine recruits in Taytay town in northern Palawan, hours after the ceasefire took effect on Sunday.

The soldiers, unarmed and in civilian clothes, were on their way to market on foot when they were killed.

Esperon said the government declared the cessation of military operations not only in observance of the Yuletide season but also for everyone "to feel the difference between violence and peace." The ceasefire, which began on Dec. 16, ends midnight of Jan. 6, 2008.

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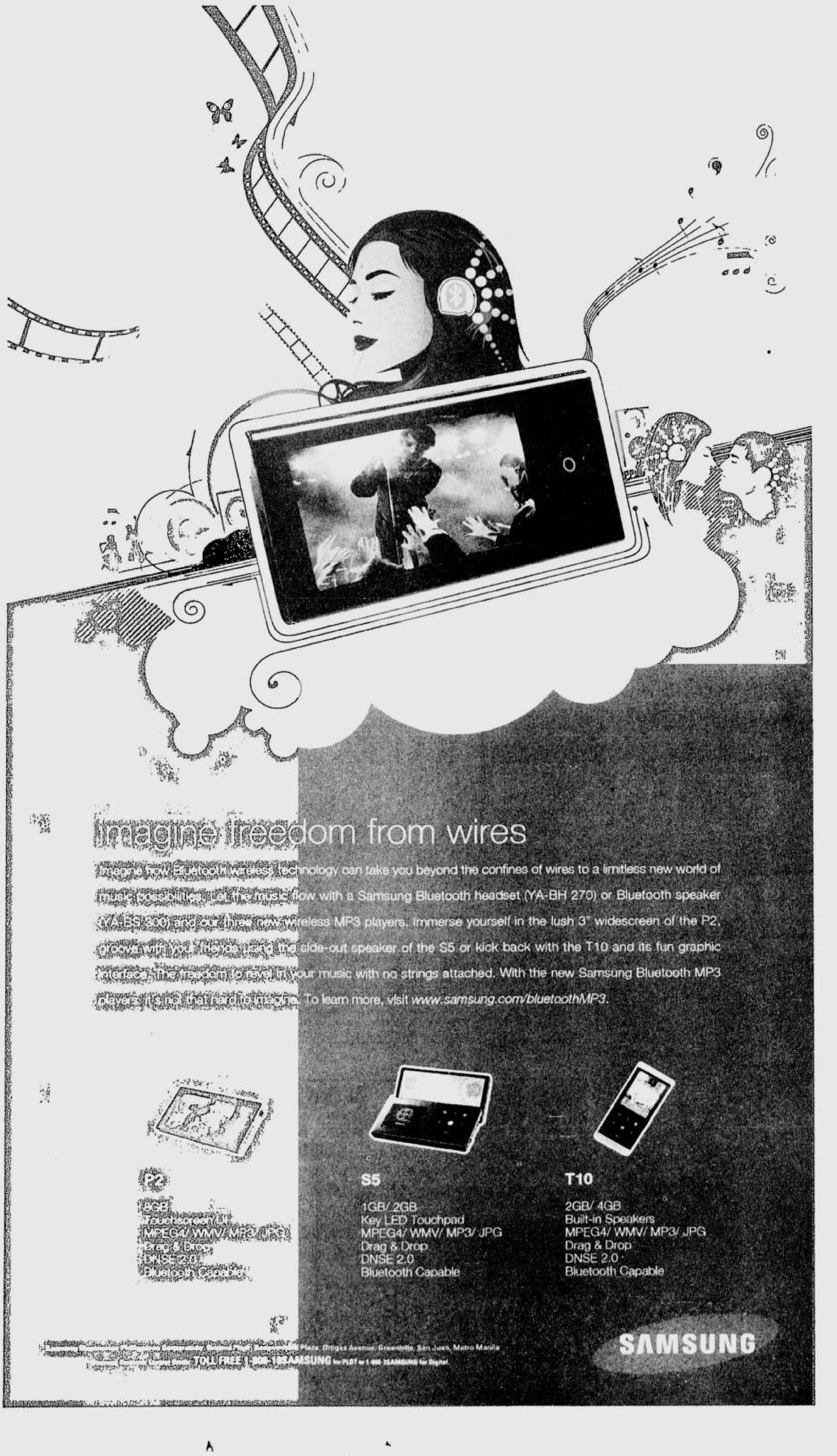

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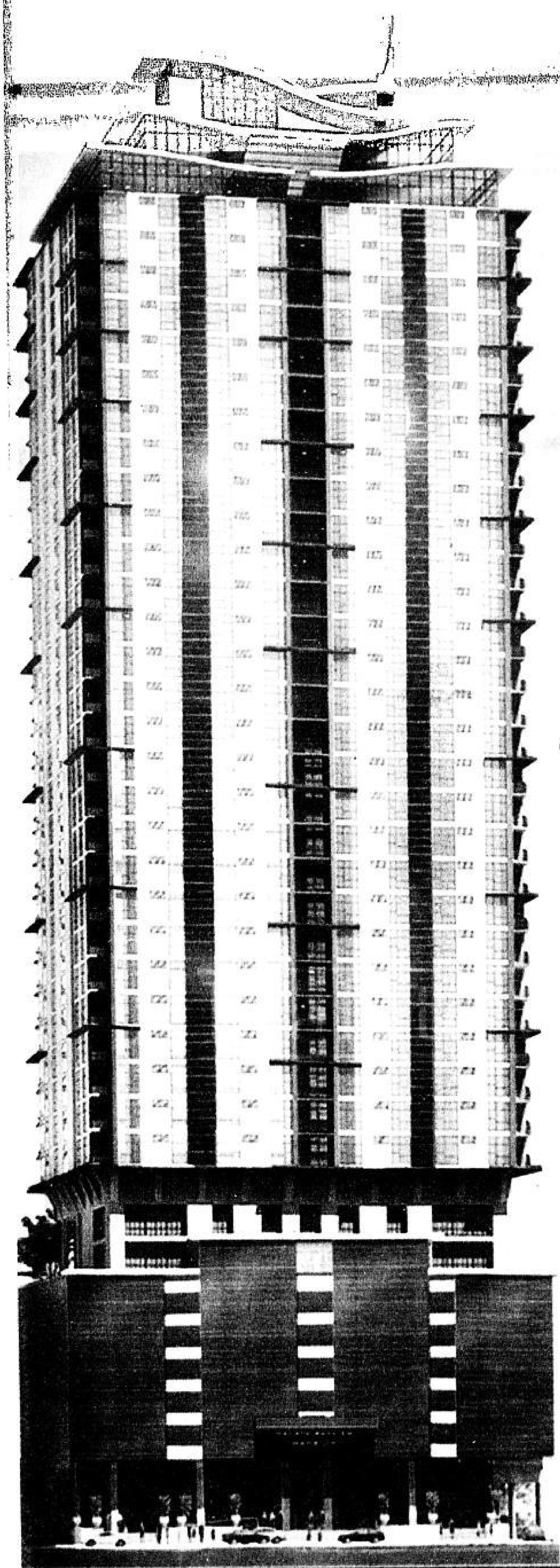

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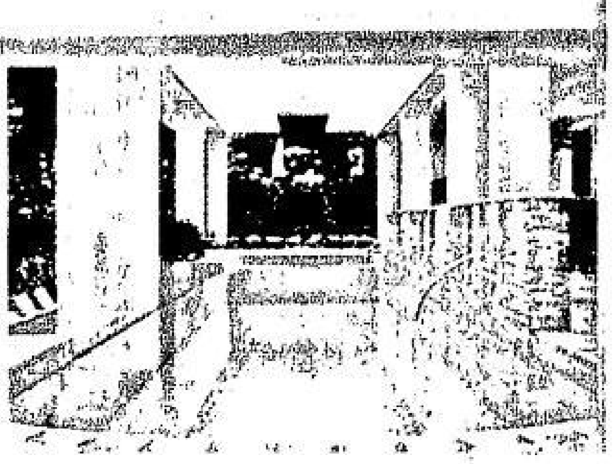

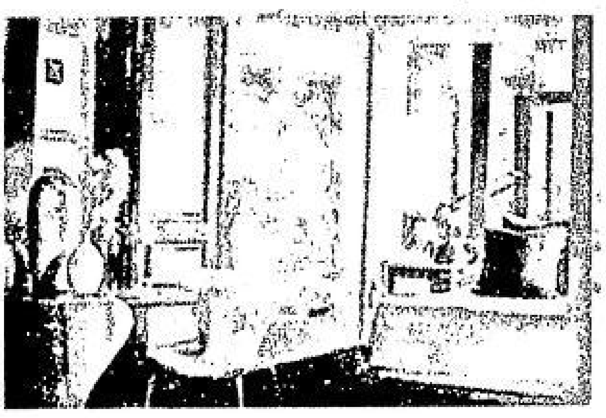

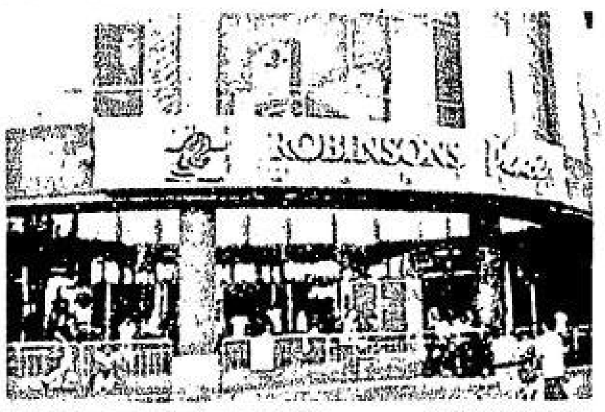

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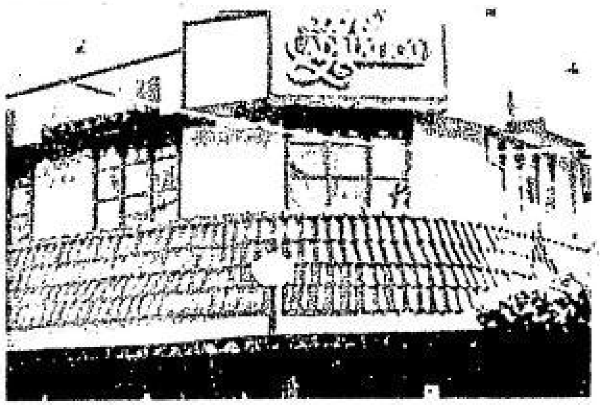

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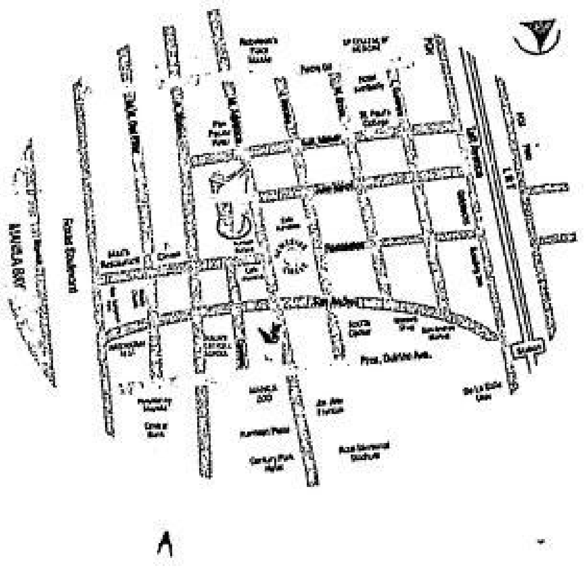

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OPINION

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EDITORIALS

Hope from Bali

ONE OF THE LESSONS OF THE RECENTLY CONcluded United Nations climate conference in Bali is that if enough pressure is applied, even the United States can be made to agree to specific actions against global warming. The Kyoto Protocol was not entirely effective because the US, the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, did not ratify the agreement. Now, there is hope that more positive developments will come after Bali.

True, the Bali agreement does not commit countries to concrete measures against global warming. But it is a good start, and should, over the next two to four years, produce some positive results. The document sets an agenda and schedule for negotiators to find ways to reduce pollution and help poor countries adapt to environmental changes by speeding up the transfer of technology and financial aid.

The agreement recognizes that the responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions rests not with the developed countries alone. Poorer and developing countries, such as China and India, will have to do their part and voluntarily curb an increase in their emissions.

The Bali agreement gives the world hope that a more inclusive, effective successor to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol will be agreed upon. With the US now on board, and with President George W. Bush bowing out of the White House in 2009, chances are great that the next US president would support international measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change is no longer a matter of scientific speculation. It is one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats facing the world and humankind today. Projected global warming this century is expected to, among other things, result in sea levels rising 18 to 59 cm, which will endanger coastal areas and small islands and cause greater frequency and severity of extreme weather events. All nations will have to take part in a concerted effort to find solutions to this very urgent problem.

Kyoto was only the first step. Now Bali points the way to closer and stronger international cooperation in the efforts to reduce global emissions.

Climate victim

A NEWS REPORT LAST WEEK SAID THAT THE Philippines was the world's top climate victim in 2006, the year during which it was struck by storms that killed more than 1,000 people and caused billions of pesos in losses. According to Germanwatch, an environment and development organization, the Philippines rose to No. 1 climate victim last year from 51st in 2005.

That the Philippines is a perpetual calamity area is known by all Filipinos. Being in the path of storms in the Pacific, it is lashed by an average of 20 typhoons and storms every year. The storms bring floods and cause landslides that kill hundreds of people and destroy hundreds of millions of pesos worth of public and private property.

There is little we can do to alter extreme weather events unless a scientific way is discovered not only to mitigate typhoons but to make them dissipate or, at least, change their paths so that they would cause the least harm. What can be done in the coming year is to try to reduce the number of deaths and injuries due to storms and floods and to make structures and places as storm-resistant and flood-resistant as possible. Our weather forecasting technology has to be upgraded so that accurate up-to-the minute warnings about extreme weather events can be reported and broadcast to the people.

The people themselves have to be made more conscious of the need to prepare and guard against extreme weather occurrences such as typhoons, storms, cyclones and floods. Right now, the people seem to take these things with resignation: "*Bahala na.*" In some other Asian countries, buildings and houses are boarded up in anticipation of storms; ships and boats are prohibited from venturing out to sea; and hourly plottings of the paths of typhoons and storms are posted in the lobbies of public and private buildings and malls for all to see. People are thus made very conscious of the need to look out for their own safety and for the security of their homes and buildings.

Typhoons, storms, floods and other extreme weather events are acts of God, or acts of nature, depending on one's beliefs. But it does not mean we should just stand idly by and do nothing to mitigate their effects.

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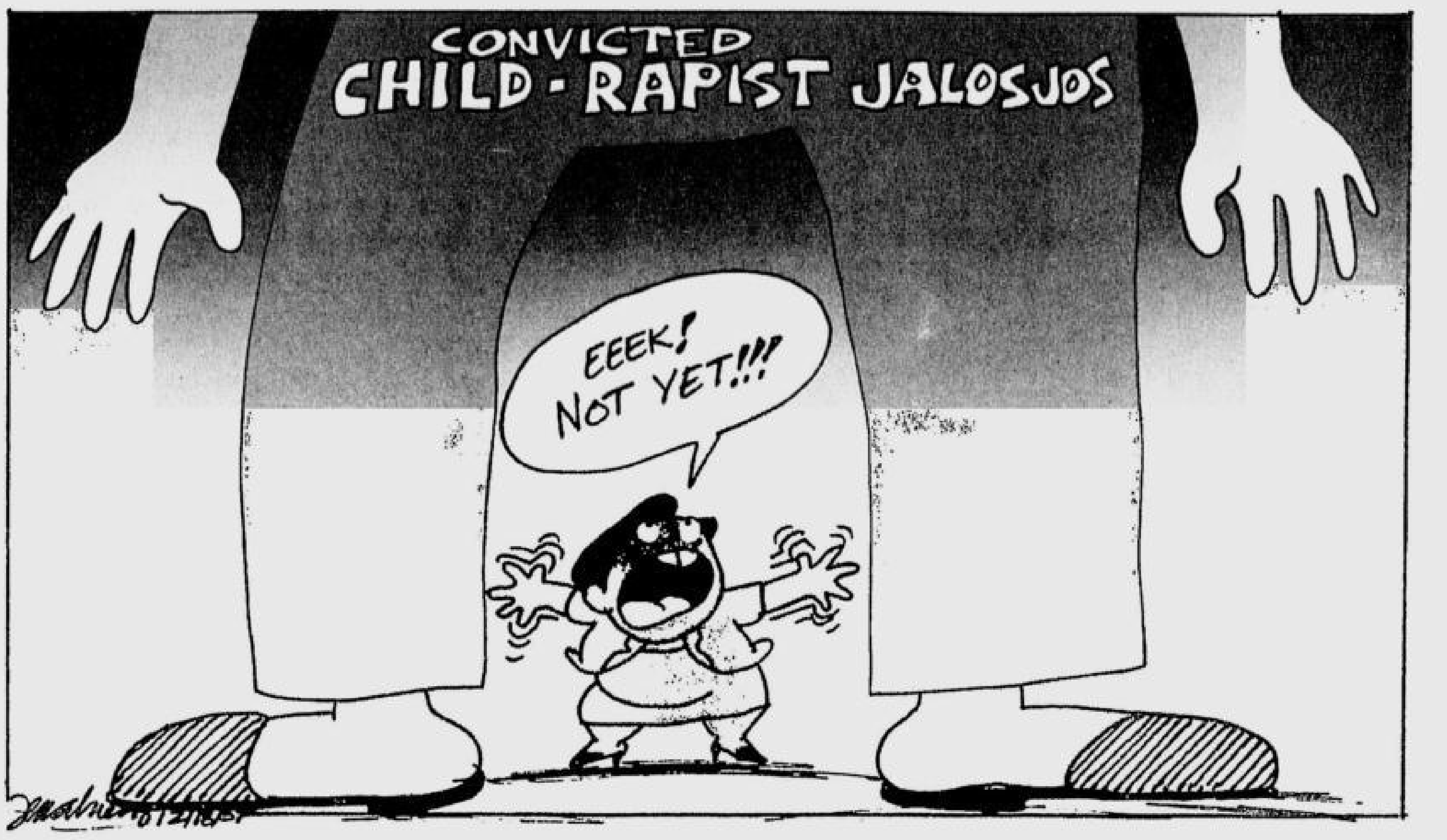

Postmortem evidence

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"SLAUGHTER OF THE BIRDS" (PDI/12/13/07) sparked heated reactions. Here are some condensed comments sparked by the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines' drive to get 10,000 signatures on an online petition to implement the moribund wildlife law (RA 9147)

"Hunters were incensed and started to harass the original petitioner Josef Sagemuller," e-mailed the Wild Bird Club's Michael Lu. They've left messages in the petition site telling Sagemuller they know where he is from as well as his background. "They insinuated (that he) seeks financial rewards from funding agencies."

"I don't know how this will end," Lu said. "But they must realize they've broken the law… We've e-mailed Senators Pia Cayetano, Loren Legarda and Miguel Zubiri, the Bacolod local government and environment office. . If nothing happens, it's up to NGOs to continue this fight."

In Palawan, John Patrick S. Matta heads the Coron Municipal Council's environment committee. He describes himself as among the "responsible hunters"—who are "not like the rest of men." Conservationists know nothing about nature. "Responsible hunters … do not shoot what we do not intend to eat. We have strict rules and can discipline ourselves. Each hunter through time matures and metamorphosis's (*sic*) into a conservationist like no other… Only a few of you conservationists have crawled on the earth that you defend…"

His father "instilled great responsibility," with an airgun gift on his eight birthday, "to commune with nature." As a high school kid he hunted at the UP Arboretum, Fairview and La Mesa Dam.

Today, "once beautiful forested hillsides have been bulldozed," Matta adds. "Nothing pains the pure blooded hunter more than to see the destruction of our quarries' habitat… Why not direct your gun sights at groups responsible for the wide scale destruction of habitats?"

"We are with you in the conservation of natural habitat," he continues. "Here in Palawan our family owns a 21-hectare piece of property that we intend to keep as a bird sanctuary and nature reserve… Be fair. We are not a bunch of gung-ho and reckless killers that you so readily labeled us to be."

Responsible hunters are a minority, says the Philippine News Agency's Eddie Barrita. Some Cebu officials hunt in Bohol and other places. And some journalists tag along. They don't bother with licenses. On their return, they flaunt their "trophies," usually of endangered species.

"Growing up in Cabadjiangan, I remember wild birds perched on towering trees," Barrita adds. "But we deforested the place. People, pollution and unchecked hunting decimated the birds. We'll never hear some sing again."

A veterinarian from University of the Philippines Los Baños, Gerardo Estrera, e-mailed to say that upon receiving the e-mail petition, he studied the issues. He surfed bird websites, mainly in geocities and concluded: "The request for signatures played on the emotions of people, without really dealing with the facts…(The Viewpoint) column makes me think that people passed judgment without studying the issues. Shouldn't we be more responsible in passing out such judgments?"

The towering UPLB chancellor and National Scientist Dioscoro Umali wrote in 1992: "Estimates are that half of our endemic flora, with their irreplaceable genetic building blocks are now gone. The same is true of our wildlife. The actual figure is probably higher."

Since then, scientists fleshed out the "Dean's" view. These include, among others, World Bank and Asian Development Bank studies, Birdlife International Red Data Book, Chicago Field Museum studies, the United Nations' State of Environment in Asia and the Pacific.

Ignorance of the hard data at this late stage is pathetic. "Demand for more 'facts' seeks the evidence of a postmortem," the Financial Times notes. Thus, Mar Patalinjug e-mailed from New York: "We Filipinos can be stupid! But what's worse are stupid predators. Can they not see our country's once-diverse fauna and flora vanishing? Soon, vast parts of this country will be deserts like Death Valley."

Fish ignore lines drawn on EEZ (exclusive economic zones) maps. Birds fly over private land or public domain. "I have never been aware of a right to shoot birds in private property," Yeb Sano says. "This is nonsense."

This was a reaction to Gino Castabdielo who designed the controversial Bacolod Air Rifle Hunting Club's website (now hustled down). "The group picture of hunters, with their total catch of the day, was taken inside a private property," he wrote. "We were invited by the land owner."

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(E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com)

Jurassic

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

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It wasn't just the Wall that fell in Berlin and it wasn't just the union that collapsed in the USSR, it was the entire ideology itself. It's no longer the power of the ideology that allows the NPA to recruit new members today, it's the depth of the country's misery. That is clearly borne out by the fact that the campuses no longer supply those recruits, where once they did abundantly—activism truly lit like a prairie fire in the 1960s and 1970s in schools—only the most desolate parts of the countryside do. Now and then you get some idealistic youth dreaming of liberating the country traipsing to the wilds, but nothing like the flood that tumbled into Isabela and Samar in the halcyon days of revolution. Desperation and not inspiration is the main motive for taking up arms under the banner of the hammer and sickle today.

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OPINION

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Hope from Bali

EDITORIALS

ONE OF THE LESSONS OF THE RECENTLY CONcluded United Nations climate conference in Bali is that if enough pressure is applied, even the United States can be made to agree to specific actions against global warming. The Kyoto Protocol was not entirely effective because the US, the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, did not ratify the agreement. Now, there is hope that more positive developments will come after Bali.

True, the Bali agreement does not commit countries to concrete measures against global warming. But it is a good start, and should, over the next two to four years, produce some positive results. The document sets an agenda and schedule for negotiators to find ways to reduce pollution and help poor countries adapt to environmental changes by speeding up the transfer of technology and financial aid.

The agreement recognizes that the responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions rests not with the developed countries alone. Poorer and developing countries, such as China and India, will have to do their part and voluntarily curb an increase in their emissions.

The Bali agreement gives the world hope that a more inclusive, effective successor to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol will be agreed upon. With the US now on board, and with President George W. Bush bowing out of the White House in 2009, chances are great that the next US president would support international measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change is no longer a matter of scientific speculation. It is one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats facing the world and humankind today. Projected global warming this century is expected to, among other things, result in sea levels rising 18 to 59 cm, which will endanger coastal areas and small islands and cause greater frequency and severity of extreme weather events. All nations will have to take part in a concerted effort to find solutions to this very urgent problem.

Kyoto was only the first step. Now Bali points the way to closer and stronger international cooperation in the efforts to reduce global emissions.

Climate victim

A NEWS REPORT LAST WEEK SAID THAT THE Philippines was the world's top climate victim in 2006, the year during which it was struck by storms that killed more than 1,000 people and caused billions of pesos in losses. According to Germanwatch, an environment and development organization, the Philippines rose to No. 1 climate victim last year from 51st in 2005.

That the Philippines is a perpetual calamity area is known by all Filipinos. Being in the path of storms in the Pacific, it is lashed by an average of 20 typhoons and storms every year. The storms bring floods and cause landslides that kill hundreds of people and destroy hundreds of millions of pesos worth of public and private property.

There is little we can do to alter extreme weather events unless a scientific way is discovered not only to mitigate typhoons but to make them dissipate or, at least, change their paths so that they would cause the least harm. What can be done in the coming year is to try to reduce the number of deaths and injuries due to storms and floods and to make structures and places as storm-resistant and flood-resistant as possible. Our weather forecasting technology has to be upgraded so that accurate up-to-the minute warnings about extreme weather events can be reported and broadcast to the people.

The people themselves have to be made more conscious of the need to prepare and guard against extreme weather occurrences such as typhoons, storms, cyclones and floods. Right now, the people seem to take these things with resignation: "*Bahala na.*" In some other Asian countries, buildings and houses are boarded up in anticipation of storms; ships and boats are prohibited from venturing out to sea; and hourly plottings of the paths of typhoons and storms are posted in the lobbies of public and private buildings and malls for all to see. People are thus made very conscious of the need to look out for their own safety and for the security of their homes and buildings.

Typhoons, storms, floods and other extreme weather events are acts of God, or acts of nature, depending on one's beliefs. But it does not mean we should just stand idly by and do nothing to mitigate their effects.

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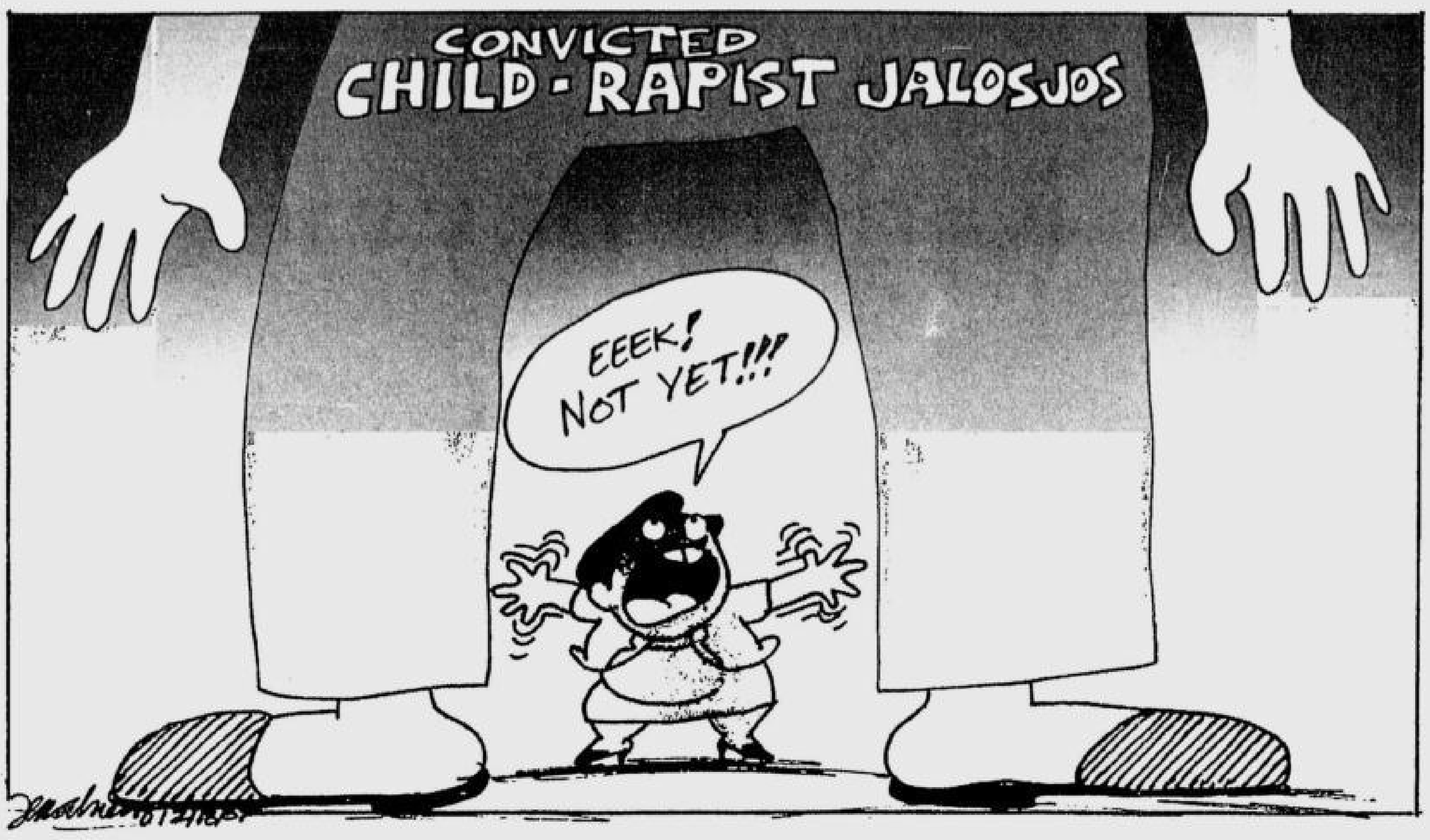

Postmortem evidence

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"SLAUGHTER OF THE BIRDS" (PDI/12/13/07) sparked heated reactions. Here are some condensed comments sparked by the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines' drive to get 10,000 signatures on an online petition to implement the moribund wildlife law (RA 9147)

"Hunters were incensed and started to harass the original petitioner Josef Sagemuller," e-mailed the Wild Bird Club's Michael Lu. They've left messages in the petition site telling Sagemuller they know where he is from as well as his background. "They insinuated (that he) seeks financial rewards from funding agencies."

"I don't know how this will end," Lu said. "But they must realize they've broken the law... We've e-mailed Senators Pia Cayetano, Loren Legarda and Miguel Zubiri, the Bacolod local government and environment office. . If nothing happens, it's up to NGOs to continue this fight."

In Palawan, John Patrick S. Matta heads the Coron Municipal Council's environment committee. He describes himself as among the "responsible hunters"—who are "not like the rest of men." Conservationists know nothing about nature. "Responsible hunters ... do not shoot what we do not intend to eat. We have strict rules and can discipline ourselves. Each hunter through time matures and metamorphosis's (*sic*) into a conservationist like no other... Only a few of you conservationists have crawled on the earth that you defend..."

His father "instilled great responsibility," with an airgun gift on his eight birthday, "to commune with nature." As a high school kid he hunted at the UP Arboretum, Fairview and La Mesa Dam.

Today, "once beautiful forested hillsides have been bulldozed," Matta adds. "Nothing pains the pure blooded hunter more than to see the destruction of our quarries' habitat... Why not direct your gun sights at groups responsible for the wide scale destruction of habitats?"

"We are with you in the conservation of natural habitat," he continues. "Here in Palawan our family owns a 21-hectare piece of property that we intend to keep as a bird sanctuary and nature reserve... Be fair. We are not a bunch of gung-ho and reckless killers that you so readily labeled us to be."

Responsible hunters are a minority, says the Philippine News Agency's Eddie Barrita. Some Cebu officials hunt in Bohol and other places. And some journalists tag along. They don't bother with licenses. On their return, they flaunt their "trophies," usually of endangered species.

"Growing up in Cabadjiangan, I remember wild birds perched on towering trees," Barrita adds. "But we deforested the place. People, pollution and unchecked hunting decimated the birds. We'll never hear some sing again."

A veterinarian from University of the Philippines Los Baños, Gerardo Estrera, e-mailed to say that upon receiving the e-mail petition, he studied the issues. He surfed bird websites, mainly in geocities and concluded: "The request for signatures played on the emotions of people, without really dealing with the facts...(The Viewpoint) column makes me think that people passed judgment without studying the issues. Shouldn't we be more responsible in passing out such judgments?"

The towering UPLB chancellor and National Scientist Dioscoro Umali wrote in 1992: "Estimates are that half of our endemic flora, with their irreplaceable genetic building blocks are now gone. The same is true of our wildlife. The actual figure is probably higher."

Since then, scientists fleshed out the "Dean's" view. These include, among others, World Bank and Asian Development Bank studies, Birdlife International Red Data Book, Chicago Field Museum studies, the United Nations' State of Environment in Asia and the Pacific.

Ignorance of the hard data at this late stage is pathetic. "Demand for more 'facts' seeks the evidence of a postmortem," the Financial Times notes. Thus, Mar Patalinjug e-mailed from New York: "We Filipinos can be stupid! But what's worse are stupid predators. Can they not see our country's once-diverse fauna and flora vanishing? Soon, vast parts of this country will be deserts like Death Valley."

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Spanish king facilitates GMA's dialogue with emir

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

I WAS INVITED BY THE PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION of the Philippines (Papi), led by its indefatigable president, Johnny Dayang, to contribute my thoughts at its recent annual national congress at the Oxford Hotel in Clark Economic Zone, where Presidential Management Staff chief Cerge Remonde delivered the keynote speech for President Macapagal-Arroyo. Papi's theme was "The Philippine Press: Unlocking Windows of Global Opportunities." I told the audience of community publishers from around the country that nothing perhaps illustrates better the buzzwords of the global village we live in—"interconnectivity" and "linkages"—than an episode during the recent state visit of the President to Spain, as related to Cecile Alvarez and me by Palace protocol chief Marciano Paynor during our dzRH program last Sunday.

* * *

Paynor said that during the talks that GMA had with King Juan Carlos, she mentioned her deep anxiety over the fate of OFW Marilou Ranario, who was due to be executed for the murder of her employer in Kuwait. GMA said she hoped to be able to plead with the Kuwaiti emir for Ranario's life, and that the Department of Foreign Affairs was working overtime to arrange a side trip there for her. Touched, the king said the emir of Kuwait was his friend and was in fact inviting him to visit. Write me a letter, he told GMA and I'll see what I can do. Apparently the king called up the emir right away as the result came fast: not just a visit but an invitation for her to stay overnight at the Kuwaiti guest house and the commutation of Ranario's sentence. It was a globalized resolution of an essentially Filipino problem, just like the negotiations for the release of kidnapped truck driver Angelo de la Cruz in Iraq four years ago, which involved a lot of back-channel talks in Syria, Jordan and other places.

* * *

As I stressed to the community publishers, the urgent task facing our nation in this globalized age is how to help our people prepare for the fierce competition among nations. We have to be like John the Baptist, driving home the message of "repentance" from inefficiency and incompetence. This means that media have to raise the vistas of the people (and the Senate) from an over-fixation with scandals and corruption issues, and allow some hard confrontation with the very real problems of globalization. How to deal with global warming in our own communities; how to find jobs for the millions of returning OFWs and utilize the expertise they picked up abroad; how to wrest more business process outsourcing from India and the mango market from Mexico and Costa Rica (even if our fruit tastes infinitely better); how to make RP businesses survive the impending abolition of all tariffs; how to make our fifth most mineralized country in the world fully competitive in the world market, instead of our local communities being so restrictive about the wealth beneath the earth.

* * *

Waiters had to quickly add tables at the dinner hosted by Speaker Jose de Venecia at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel last week, as so many guests came, drawn doubtless by the three honorees in their late 40s, all distinguished sons of distinguished world leaders: Saif Al-Islam Muammar Al-Qadhafi, son of Libyan Leader Muammar Al-Qadhafi; Martin Luther King III, son of the great martyred US civil rights leader; and Dr. Hyun Jin Moon, son of Reverend Moon of the Universal Peace Federation. They were here for different purposes and it was quite a feat for JDV to gather them in one dinner.

Saif, a tall, handsome man with a master's degree in philosophy and studying for a doctorate at the London School of Economics, is credited with delicate back-channel negotiations with various world leaders on his father's behalf, through the Gaddafi Foundation that he heads. Notable among them was the "unprecedented settlement" of the 1988 Lockerbie incident in Scotland, which resulted in the lifting of economic and political sanctions against Libya by the United Nations. Saif is also credited with the rapprochement of his country with the West. He also figured prominently in the release of Western and South African hostages captured by Abu Sayyaf rebels when he journeyed to Mindanao in 2000. During this recent trip, he again met with Muslim leaders to discuss problems of unity and solidarity with the government. What's significant about that meeting is that the Muslim leaders agreed to set a time table for the total resolution of the Mindanao conflict "possibly not beyond September 2008" and that the peace roadmap shall be drawn by Saif "with the active support of other Muslim countries." He pledged to the President to work harder for unity in Mindanao.

* * *

Martin Luther King III, a spitting image of his father, and Dr. Hyun Jin Moon, who speaks with an American accent and cuts a polished image, were here to attend the "Global Peace Festival" at the Luneta that drew about 250,000 people from various faiths and denominations. At the dinner hosted by the Speaker, both batted for greater tolerance and more interaction among the world's different faiths, with King giving special emphasis to the protection of civil rights as preached by his father. At the Luneta rally where JDV was the keynote speaker, he reiterated the message he has been hammering at the UN and recently at the opening of the "World Religions—Universal Peace—Global Ethic" exhibit sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation at the Mall of Asia: the need to "globalize our moral values and ethical standard, if we are to adequately deal with the social, ecological and moral problems the world faces." Echoing the famous line of Martin Luther King Jr., JDV said: "I have a dream that God loves the world so much—the 1.6 billion Christians, the over a billion Muslims, the nearly a billion Buddhists and many other faiths." God surely will not abandon all these believers, he said, but we all should also help ourselves by being more tolerant of one another. These days, as someone put it, JDV is sounding more and more like a preacher.

Christmas in other climes

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

FLYING INTO BANGKOK BARELY TWO WEEKS before Christmas, one expected at least a semblance of holiday cheer. While Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist country, it is a major tourist destination, so it wouldn't be amiss to look forward to some public sign of the approaching holiday, at least.

But the first Christmas décor one spots are in the hotel, in the form of some perfunctory modern-looking trees lit in blue, of all colors. As we board an elevator, I complain to my companions that "it hardly feels like Christmas here." To which Rep. Rodante Marcoleta, representing the legislature at our workshop, replies, "Well, at least they're playing carols."

He's right, there were Christmas songs playing, but they'd been rearranged in some jazzy pop style that one hardly recognized them. And that, one decides, is the trouble with Christmas in a foreign clime. It plays like elevator music.

Shopping malls do try their best. Plazas are bedecked with cheery pots of poinsettias and there's a jolly Santa riding a sleigh on the atrium of MBK. But while at this time of year malls in Manila are crammed with shoppers and the air is thick with anticipation, if not tension, in Bangkok the vibe is laid-back and unseasonal. Sure, consumerism still rules the day, but there is none of the feverish rush one feels upon entering a temple of commerce here, at this time of year.

The lack of a sense of urgency is refreshing. But one never realized one would miss the frenzy, the fuss, the fast-paced racing from one shop to another, in search of the perfect gift, the just-right present.

Christmas here is so in-your-face, some years you just want to bury your head under a pillow until the season passes. But all you need is a glimpse of Christmas in a different setting to realize what it is one would miss, far from home.

* * *

AND so one flies off to Boracay.

When the invitation to pay another visit to the island came just a few days before the trip to Bangkok, one nursed thoughts of turning it down. After all, one's gift list isn't complete yet, and shopping chores have barely begun. But the thought of taking a respite on an island, soaking in the sun while everyone else battles through traffic and fights off testy shoppers and surly store clerks is deeply appealing. And with a concert of Matt Munroe Jr. to round off the deal—what can one say but yes?

The concert venue is a resort by the name One MGM—for "One (of) My Greatest Moment(s)," a new name conferred by the new management, led by magazine publisher and entertainment industry figure Ramoncito O. Cruz. A resort village found in Station Three in Barangay Manoc-Manoc, One MGM is still in transition, making do with the existing facilities that include accommodations in a variety of architectural styles and a number of swimming pools and even a huge jacuzzi. But Cruz shows us artist's renderings of planned developments, including a hotel and leisure center on an adjacent property.

* * *

THE CONCERT by Matt Munro Jr., then, is an apt inaugural event for the reborn resort. With Faith Cuneta in fine voice and form as opening act, the concert by the resort's pool is an easy, no-frills treat. The British performer is easy-going and likeable, sprinkling his repertoire with dry wit and humorous asides. He may not quite match his father's distinctive voice, but he does imbue even Matt Munro standards with his own style and phrasing.

And to his credit, MMJ includes some Christmas pop staples in his show, then endears himself to Pinoys with his interpretation of the Martin Nievera "classic" "Be My Lady," and capping the night's numbers with the enduring movie theme song "Born Free."

Introducing "From Russia with Love," a James Bond movie theme, MMJ recalled that it was offered to his father "because the producers said he bore a striking resemblance to the lead star." When someone in the audience piped up that he was about to sing "Born Free," the British singer laughed and retorted: "Not a lion, silly, he didn't look like a lion!"

* * *

THE NEXT morning, we make our way to Lemon Café in D'Mall for breakfast with my cousin Millie and her friend from PAL, who had come over for the inauguration of the Air Philippines ticket office in Caticlan Airport.

Then we spend the rest of the morning shopping—an unavoidable task these days, even in the best beach in the world—in D'Mall and in the nearby *talipapa* for unique souvenir items and possible gifts. We stroll down the beachfront towards Zuzuni, where we meet with Nick Latsis of Seair, which flew us over from Manila. Over lamb *adobo* and prawns with pistachio crust, we discuss the state of aviation in the country as well as exciting developments in the youngest airline in the country which we'll tackle in subsequent columns.

For the moment, Seair offers the Seair Visa Card, which lets users take free flights to any of the airline's destinations via "Privilege Points" one earns for every P40 spent. Patrick Tan, Seair VP for commercial affairs, says cardholders can also earn double points when they buy their Seair tickets using the card.

That evening, we motor to the Fairways and Blue Water property high up on a hill behind the famous White Beach for dinner at Andaluz. Chef and owner Binggoy Remedios says the Spanish-Moroccan restaurant is still a work in progress, but already, it has earned a distinction as one of the "10 Best Restaurants in the Philippines," cited by Food Magazine. As saucer after saucer of tapas, plus a generous serving of paella and lamb skewers with couscous is laid before us, we toast to years gone by and comfort food of our youth, a lovely way of easing back to hectic Manila and Christmas as we know it.

The uses of error

NEWSSTAND

John Nery

A COUPLE OF DAYS AFTER PULSE ASIA released additional results of its October 2007 "Ulat ng Bayan" survey, I rang up Ana Maria Tabunda, the poll organization's executive director. She confirmed my initial guess, that the three questions on "corruption-related issues" (as she described them in the cover letter to the second release) were "riders"—that is, additional questions proposed by survey subscribers. (The use of the term, if I am not mistaken, is borrowed from legislative practice.)

The use of riders is standard, of course, as even those in Malacañang who now deny the very possibility of science (a denial Randy David warned us about last Saturday), would have to agree. Riders help make opinion polling a little more cost-effective; at the same time, because the main survey is completely its responsibility, Pulse Asia can claim, as it does claim, that it "undertakes Ulat ng Bayan surveys on its own without any party singularly commissioning the research effort."

But even riders are subjected to the same strict standards of survey design and analysis. Dr. Tabunda was emphatic on this point. The questions from ex-senator and regular survey subscriber Serge Osmeña could not be included in their original form, she said. It was only after Osmeña signed off on Pulse Asia's revised version that the questions (available online, as footnotes in the tables of findings) were included in the October poll. As I hope all reporters learn in their first few months on the job, there is a science even in the phrasing of questions.

* * *

It pained me to see Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, possibly Malacañang's straightest thinker, adopt the small-sample defense (even if only by implication). Instead of, say, asking whether the sample of 1,200 voting-age Filipinos Pulse Asia canvassed was truly random or not, he echoed Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye's innumerate demonization of the use of random samples in the first place.

Survey findings can be mistaken, of course; that, in part, is what the margin of error is for. But think about it. The power of surveys—a power Malacañang itself put to good use in April and May 2004 and June and July 2005—rests on both the recognition that errors are inevitable and on the possibility that they can be accounted for.

* * *

I have been catching up on my reading of the literature on Rizal. In a particular sense, the current high interest of scholars both here and abroad in Rizal's work can be traced to the influence of the incomparable Benedict Anderson. Rizal's "Noli" played a pivotal role in his seminal work on the roots of nationalism, "Imagined Communities." And in "The Specter of Comparisons," Anderson borrows his very title, and the concept of a "double-consciousness" at the heart of nationalism, from an evocative phrase Rizal uses in the "Noli."

It was while reading "Specter," however, that I came upon a telling error. It was, to use Anderson's favorite modifier, most instructive.

In "The First Filipino," a review of Rizal literature published in the London Review of Books in 1997 and occasioned by the publication of Soledad Lacson-Locsin's translation of the "Noli," Anderson described Crisostomo Ibarra's visit to the Manila Botanical Garden, where he is assaulted by "*el demonio de las comparaciones.*" Anderson writes: "It was this specter that, after some frustrating years writing for 'La Solidaridad,' the organ of the small group of committed 'natives' fighting in the metropole for political reform, led him to write 'Noli Me Tangere,' the first of the two great novels for which Rizal will always be remembered."

Can you spot the mistake? "Soli" was founded in 1889; the "Noli" was published in 1887. Rizal started writing for "Soli" on his second sojourn in Europe; he wrote the "Noli" on his first.

* * *

To be sure, as Carlos Quirino, Leon Ma. Guerrero and Austin Coates all agree, frustration was one of those demons that drove Rizal to write his first and greatest novel. (Like a Hollywood sequel, "El Filibusterismo" has bigger bang for the buck, but is somewhat of a letdown.) And even if I have not met the great scholar, I am certain (from reading Jojo Abinales' affectionate introduction to the Philippine edition of "Imagined Communities") that Anderson would welcome this modest attempt to correct a minor error. (Scholarship, like the science the late Lewis Thomas celebrated in his essays, is built on man's capacity to make—and learn from—the "happy mistake.")

And what do I learn from this mistake in chronology? It is a conflation (I imagine) of the struggles Rizal endured, to which there is (we must admit) an unmistakable pattern. Indeed, if I focus on the irresistible arc of Rizal's personal narrative, I can imagine myself making the same error. Rizal lived a script-ready life.

* * *

Some time in 2003 or 2004, someone who was partially responsible for the operation told me that Malacañang had some 2,000 telephone lines (he said lines, but he may have meant numbers or SIM cards) it could use to mobilize text-message support on certain issues or in certain situations (such as live polling on TV talk shows). I have never verified this assertion for myself (to be sure, I trusted my confidant). But in the last couple of days, I have been receiving text messages from unknown numbers—all from the same polluted source. How do I know? Because the errors and misspellings in the messages, claiming that the "most corrupt" survey findings are the dastardly work of two named individuals, are exactly the same. A word to the wise: Pulse Asia's boss is Rapa Lopa, not "Rafa."

Anonymity

YOUNG BLOOD

Tina Pastelero

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

SOMETIMES I THINK THERE ARE ONLY TWO DEGREES OF separation between everyone in Manila. When I'd meet someone new, if I tried hard enough, we'd be able to trace some obscure connection between the two of us: we could have gone to the same school, grown up a few blocks from one another, have parents that hail from the same province, or just find that we were somehow related to one another. (Of course, this all could also just be a testament to the relative narrowness of my world.)

In any case, having grown up, studied and worked in Manila, I find I've been surrounded by pretty much the same group of people all my life. I went to university with people I knew in high school, and ended up working with people that graduated from the same undergraduate course that I did. In a city where everyone knows everyone, I have my parents trying to figure out if they know the parents of any new friends I make, business contacts saying they've worked with my relatives, new friends telling me they know one or more of my six siblings.

I decided to go to graduate school in the United States a few months ago, and welcomed the change of knowing no one, and being able to choose what I revealed about myself to people. There were no pre-conceived notions about me because of where I went to school, or where I happened to live.

So naturally there's a heightened self-awareness because I'm constantly being asked to redefine myself over and over as I continue to meet hundreds of my classmates. Where are you from? What line of work were you in before? Why did you go to graduate school? I have the misfortune of speaking English with an accent that many just assume is American (I blame this on too much "Sesame Street," "Miami Vice" and "Baywatch" growing up). Thus, I am mistaken for an American for a few minutes before they ask me where I'm from and I launch into a mini-geography lesson of where the Philippines can be found on a world map.

In response to other typical "getting to know you" questions, there are times I just give a straight-up reply, telling them about my former job and employer, alongside a quick blurb on my short and long-term career goals. And there are times I still make a joke about being a foreign provincial bumpkin of sorts, saying that I was "fresh off the boat" because I had come from Manila immediately before grad school.

Since I've moved to the US, I've discovered a wonderful sense of silence that I don't get in Manila. Pico Iyer has written a gorgeous essay on the eloquent sounds of silence where he says, "Silence is something more than just a pause; it is that enchanted place where space is cleared and time is stayed and the horizon itself expands." I find that being alone with my thoughts can sometimes be better company than casual acquaintances.

I love the anonymity of being a stranger, and of being able to go out and read the newspaper or a book alone, without the common Manila-esque thought that I would probably bump into someone I knew. The Filipino Connection is too strong to be completely avoided though, and even here in Philadelphia, I once found myself on a random Sunday dimsum brunch in Chinatown with: two former professors who ended up married to one another, someone I knew from a Church group in Manila, and a number of undergraduate students who kept on referring to me as the "*ate*" of my younger siblings they knew.

As time passes, the new people I've met have started to find out more about me (and me about them) as I disclose bits and bobs about myself. I talk about my love for scuba diving, and how I've been diving at least once a month for the last four years. I talk about how even during midterm week, when I was getting four hours of sleep a day, I'd make time to read a few pages of Murakami's "Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman," so that I could take a break from Managerial Economics. I talk about why "In the Mood for Love" is one of my favorite films of all time, and why I felt like watching "Lust, Caution" on a busy Sunday between group meetings, problem sets, and 10-page case analyses.

I talk about how I like to make 12-hour playlists for my long stretches of studying with everyone from The Beatles to Nina Simone to The Shins to Amy Winehouse. I talk about how I used to cook big-group dinners all the time, and how it's been a strange adjustment to cook for one person.

Now these things, my family and friends from Manila already know about me. With regard to best friends I've known for over 15 years, we're so attuned to one another that we can practically read each others' minds. And in my family, where we've known each other all our lives, we have no trouble understanding obscure comments and strange moods. Is there a loneliness attached to being a stranger and having to constantly explain myself? Not at all.

As I mentioned, there's a great support system here of more than enough Filipinos to swap cooking, shopping and general survival tips with, and more than enough academic work to keep me busy. In the meantime, I continue to enjoy the daily quiet of my grad-school life. But, of course, I'm also looking forward to the holidays, when for a few weeks I'll be going back to the cacophony of my Manila life, where everybody knows my name.

Tina Pastelero, 26, is a first year MBA student at The Wharton School of Business of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Antidote to gambling

"Protest is good, but providing an alternative is better.... What we want to do is to take gambling out of their vocabulary by consistently talking about their capacity to earn bread through honest labor."

—Balanga Bishop Socrates Villegas explaining the goal of Asa, a micro-finance project initiated by the Diocese of Balanga. The project's objective is to rescue people from poverty and the evils of gambling.

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Dreaming of peace

THIS COMING CHRISTMAS WILL BE the first time I won't be with my family—that is, after 19 years on this earth. I thought it would surely be my bluest Christmas yet.

But upon reading an article about the children planning to send a Christmas letter appealing to the government for a peaceful and safe Christmas, I realized that there are children who are deprived of so many things in life, things that they should be enjoying. I realized how lucky I am and how lucky those who do not experience the war in the south. These children in Mindanao are not asking for gifts, clothes, or food; they are asking for peace—if only for this coming Christmas.

I wonder how President Macapagal-Arroyo and the honorable public officials who went to Spain for an early Christmas feel about these children and their desire for peace.

—CARLO MAYO P. ANTALAN,
carloantalan_16@yahoo.com.ph

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Additional signatory to Nov. 28 manifesto

PLEASE INCLUDE MY NAME AS ONE OF the many signatories to the manifesto titled "We Reject a Morally Bankrupt Government." (INQUIRER, 11/28/07)

To reiterate the last paragraph of the manifesto: "We cannot allow pain and ruin of the Filipino. We cannot have a nation without a soul, governance without morality. We must unite! We must struggle for Truth! For Justice! For Meaningful and Fundamental Change!"

I honestly believe that our country urgently needs a moral revolution.

Kudos and more power to the authors of the manifesto!

—CRISOSTOMO B. VILAR,
vice mayor, Pagsanjan, Laguna

Cartoon helped perpetuate the wrong image

THIS PERTAINS TO THE INQUIRER'S Dec. 5 editorial cartoon which depicted the Armed Forces of the Philippines denouncing the findings of the Alston Report as lies. The cartoon succeeded in capturing the popular sentiment that the AFP is "in a state of denial" to its alleged commission of extrajudicial killings in the country. This sentiment, popular as it has been made by Philip Alston and the Philippine media, is far from being fair.

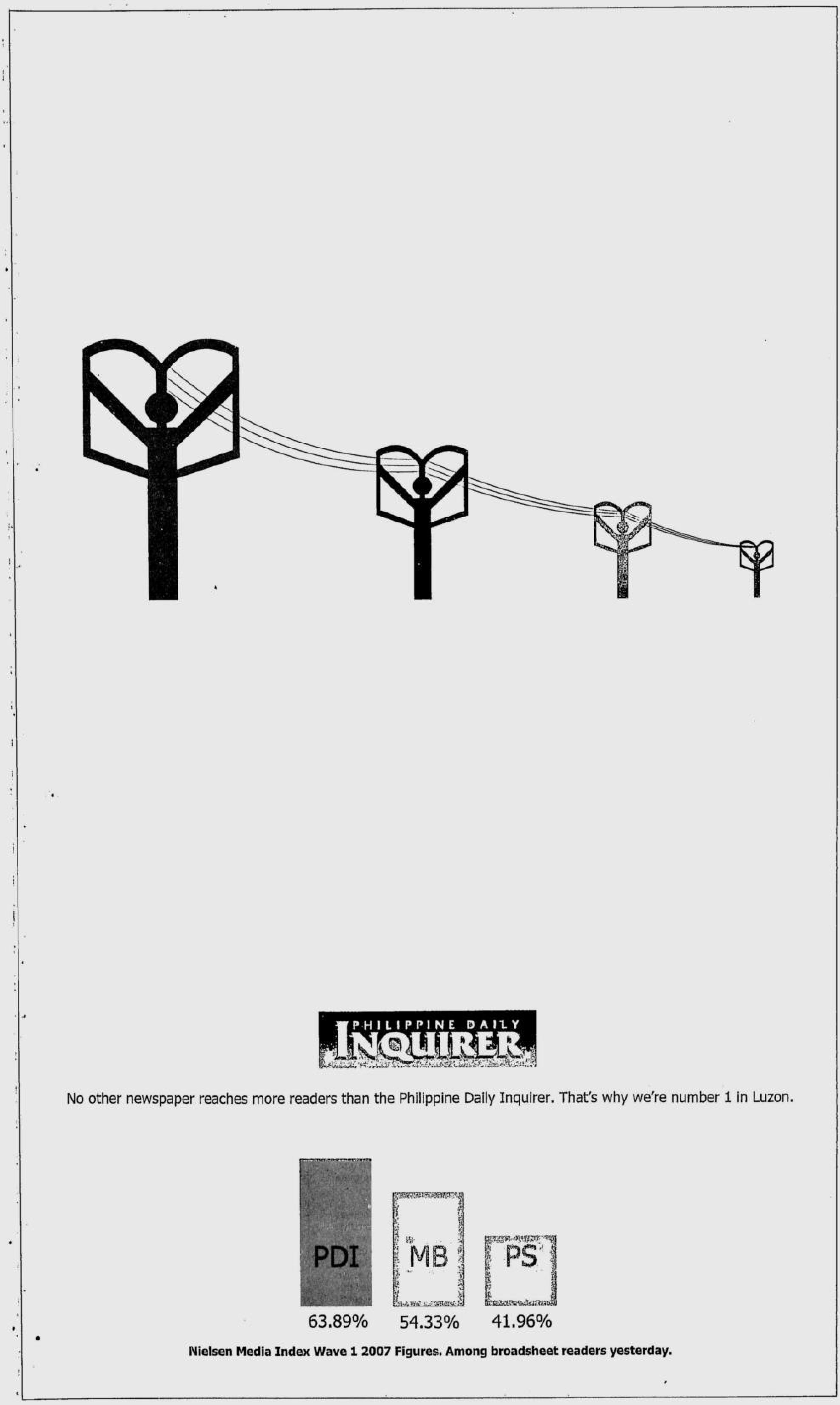
But then again, if the Philippine media has touted the AFP as the perpetrators of these atrocities, certainly a simple caricature cannot be expected to give justice to the embattled image of the AFP.

The Alston Report did not categorically identify the AFP as the sole and undeniable institutional perpetrator of extrajudicial killings in the country. The report also did not altogether dismiss the effort of the Philippine government, the AFP included, in addressing this issue. As a matter of fact, President Macapagal-Arroyo signed last Nov. 26 Administrative Order 211 creating the Task Force against Political Violence (also known as Task Force 211), for the sole purpose of consolidating the national effort to resolve these killings. Likewise, the AFP has since done its homework and remains equally committed and focused in resolving this issue.

Thus, the editorial cartoon only insinuated and propagated the popular yet unsupported notion that the AFP is in a state of denial and remains unperturbed by the issue, and nothing more.

The INQUIRER's much vaunted commitment to "Balanced News, Fearless Views" is reassuring enough for us to expect fairer treatment of the AFP in relation to this issue. But the Filipino people have yet to see a depiction of the CPP-NPA's penchant for People's Courts, which according to Alston "do not comply with human rights and humanitarian law standards." This hardly exposed fact has persistently eluded the INQUIRER's "Balanced News and Fearless Views" style of journalism. But then again, it might be too much to expect from the INQUIRER.

—RICARDO R. BLANCAFLOR,
undersecretary,
Department of Justice, Manila



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

No other newspaper reaches more readers than the Philippine Daily Inquirer. That's why we're number 1 in Luzon.

Nielsen Media Index Wave 1 2007 Figures. Among broadsheet readers yesterday.

Maynilad: We fixed pipe on day letter came out

THIS REFERS TO FERNANDO A. DE SEquera Jr.'s letter about a leaking pipe in the middle of a street in Sta. Mesa, Manila. (INQUIRER, 12/3/07)

The pipe in question was repaired on the same day that his letter appeared. The delay in repairing the leak was due to the need to first secure an excavation permit which our crew needed to make repairs in a busy thoroughfare such as the one in which the busted pipe was located.

As to the cost of the leaking water eventually being passed on to our customers, we would like to assure De Sequera and the public that our customers only pay for the water that passes through their meters.

We would like to take this opportunity to inform the public that Maynilad, under its new owners (the DMIC-MPIC consortium), is currently undertaking a massive upgrading and expansion program amounting to P5 billion this year and another P6 billion next year, precisely to reduce, if not eliminate, such problems as leaking pipes, faulty meters and illegal connections; and to provide much better service for our West Zone customers.

We thank De Sequera for his concern, and we apologize to the public for whatever inconvenience brought about by our massive, ongoing pipe-laying projects.

—JESS MATUBIS JR.,
assistant vice president,
Corporate Affairs
and Media Relations,
Maynilad Water Services Inc.
Katipunan Road, Balara, QC

Police right and media wrong in Pen takeover

THE PENINSULA MANILA TAKEover should teach us a lesson: Never trust anyone who uses the gun as a first resort to solve his problems. In a civil society, the use of guns in any situation is utterly unacceptable. (Not that I believe this, but this is how it is in civil society.)

I am someone who is known to have a really bad temper. Many times I wish I could just cock a gun and shoot at the object of my rage. But then again, we are governed not only by the laws of man, but by the laws of God as well.

I am one of the stupid people who voted for Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV because I thought that it was better to take his fight to the Senate than to the streets. He wanted the military to have a voice; we, 11 million voters, decided to give it to him.

We are so tired of this country's woes. We are tired of this country's failure to take off in the last 21 years, because every time we begin to show signs of recovery, some cocky rightist would launch a coup against the government. When will the coups ever end?

Trillanes has betrayed us.

I think the way the police and the military handled the situation was laudable. Some may say that crashing an armed personnel carrier (APC) into the hotel was overkill. I don't think so. By swiftly and decisively crushing the coup, the government has shown that it will do everything in its power to deal with any attempt to destabilize the government and the economy.

I also applaud Senate President Manuel Villar for discouraging a Senate inquiry on this one. He said he'd rather wait for the courts to decide. He's right. We have institutions that are ready to work for us, if we are ready to build a strong case. Getting the Senate involved in every issue best left to the courts would be a waste of taxpayer's money.

As for the spoiled media crying foul over their arrest, I think they deserved it. They were reporting everything, including police positions. The government forces lost its advantage of surprise. The only way they could gain the upper hand was to barge into the hotel quickly with an APC and tear gas.

Let the media do their job? Don't get in their way? How about the media getting into the way of the police and military operations? If you don't want to get burned, don't go into the burning house!

—LAWRENCE SEE,
lcsee@pbcom.com.ph

2, 445, '25 to 40' key to saving Earth

From page A1

million of carbon dioxide, and a 25-to-40-percent reduction in global warming gases—a formula, some say, to save the planet from climate change's severest consequences.

In the end, at US insistence, none of those numbers appeared in key final document of the United Nations conference.

But in the coming two years of crucial climate negotiations, as authorized at Bali, those simple numbers are sure to become chips in the high-stakes diplomatic, political and economic bargaining of almost 190 nations involved.

Saturday's decision ending the two-week meeting capped a year in which a UN network of climate scientists delivered troubling news: Global warming is a fact, very likely attributable to manmade emissions; warming seas are rising faster all the time; and impacts are already felt, from species extinction to erratic weather.

Things are likely to get much, much worse if the world doesn't sharply reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and a handful of other industrial, transportation and agricultural gases blamed for global warming, according to a series of reports issued by the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Serious effects

The IPCC noted that the atmosphere had already warmed by an average 0.7 degrees Celsius (1 degree Fahrenheit) compared with the early 19th century, and that with an additional 1.3 degrees, totaling 2 degrees Celsius (3.4 degrees Fahrenheit), serious effects would ensue—regional water shortages, crop failures, widespread loss of coral reefs, more deaths from heat waves, more severe storms, etc.

To keep the cumulative rise to 2 degrees Celsius, the panel concluded, heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere should be kept below 445 parts per million in carbon dioxide or its equivalent in other gases. The concentration is now estimated at below 400, after subtracting offsetting heat-shielding effects.

Early in the Bali conference, more than 200 scientists—many of them UN report authors—made a rare foray into politics and diplomacy with a petition calling on the UN climate treaty nations to adopt those 2-degree and 445-ppm ceilings as a "minimum requirement."

The European Union and many other nations had already done so, endorsing the goal of reducing industrial nations' greenhouse gas emissions by 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, a formula the IPCC has suggested to keep temperatures rising no more than 2 degrees Celsius.

That goal was also inscribed into the early drafts of the Bali final document, which envisioned contributions, too, from such fast-developing poorer nations as China and India, in the form of voluntary programs to rein in emissions growth.

Dropped from document

"This process has to be driven by the science," said environmentalist Matthias Duwe, of Europe's Climate Action Network. "There are no questions any more about the sheer scale of the challenge we are facing."

But the numbers were rejected by the United States and were eventually dropped from the Bali document.

"The European approach is focused exclusively on the science, but we also have to analyze the actual technological pathways it takes to get to a particular objective," Jim Connaughton, White House environmental chief, told reporters here.

"We can be very ambitious, but cuts that deep, that fast, are simply beyond reach."

Alone among major industrial nations, the United States rejects the relatively modest cuts of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

The task that the rest of the world has now taken on, with the upcoming "Bali Roadmap" negotiations, is to try to bring the Americans into a new, post-2012 regime of deep and mandatory reductions in greenhouse emissions.

Many nations as well as scientists look beyond the Bush administration and toward a new negotiating partner that will be chosen in next November's US presidential election, an American leader many expect to be a Democrat.

They were encouraged by the words last week of a key Democratic environmentalist, Sen. John Kerry, discussing the upcoming climate negotiations with The Associated Press.

"If scientists are telling us we have to keep Earth's increase in temperature to no more than 2 degrees Celsius and 445 ppm, that has to be the guide," the Massachusetts senator said. "That's the heart and soul of any negotiation." *AP*

SAMI RUISMAEKI, one of Finland's 7,000 reindeer herders whose livelihoods are becoming more and more precarious, tends to a reindeer in the Finnish Arctic town of Rovaniemi. AFP

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 18, 2007
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Jer 23:5-8
Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

This is how Jesus Christ was born. Mary his mother had been given to Joseph in marriage but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Then Joseph, her husband, made plans to divorce her in all secrecy. He was an upright man, and in no way did he want to discredit her.

While he was pondering over this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She has conceived by the Holy Spirit, and now she will bear a son. You shall call him 'Jesus' for he will save his people from their sins."

All this happened in order to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he will be called Emmanuel which means: God-with-us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do and he took his wife to his home. So she gave birth to a son and he had not had marital relations with her. Joseph gave him the name of Jesus.

Commentary

We await a child. But this child will be a man of justice, integrity, and wisdom in his governance of the world. His name is "the Lord of justice." The history of Israel continues—out of Egypt into Israel, out of Babylon into Israel—now it lies in bondage under Rome. But they will again live in their own lands—but now this land is all the world, the kingdom of God in Jesus, born of God and humankind in Mary.

Joseph, the just man, breaks a law to save the life of the woman he is engaged to because he hears the Word of God in the dream of the angel, and the words of the ancient Scriptures and the prophecies. He hopes and lives on God's word, even sleeping and dreaming God's revelation. Joseph in Matthew's gospel is the image of the one who becomes a follower of the One who is to come: the child born and named Jesus who saves his people from their sins. Joseph is the obedient one, who knows that no law can ever be used to destroy life or to harm another person. He obeys the word of God and interprets all the old into new life for all, giving his life so that others may live. And so, he becomes the man who adopts the God-child Jesus as his own son. There is so much to learn of Joseph the believer, as much as anything we could learn from his wife/friend Mary.

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Bishop says 2 years short to repair GMA image

DAGUPAN CITY—LINGAYEN-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said President Macapagal-Arroyo's remaining two years "to govern, to rule or reign, as the case may be… appear too short and too restrictive for her to effect a drastic change in her governance for the better."

"It is too short for her to reverse her appalling performance, especially in the [fight against] graft and corruption, and more concretely in the sphere of honesty, integrity and propriety," said Cruz in a statement posted in his blog (ovc.blogspot.com) on Monday.

"Short of saying hers is a hopeless case, there appears to be already too many skeletons in her closet, too many conspirators at her back, too many moral garbage all around her," he said.

Staying on

Cruz, a staunch critic of Ms Arroyo, warned of an even worse scenario—that her administration continues beyond 2010 courtesy of amendments to the Constitution or through the declaration of a national state of emergency or martial law.

Last week, survey results released by Pulse Asia showed that its respondents perceived the Arroyo administration as the most corrupt among the five administrations the country has had since 1965.

"With such unnerving, disconcerting and depressing public depreciation of the present Malacañang occupant, whose legitimacy continues to be even haunted by strong public denunciations… it becomes more and more difficult to play numb and act dumb about such national bad news," he said.

Cruz said the survey finding, "while detestable and unnerving, is neither altogether surprising nor absolutely unacceptable."

He said the more important and relevant issue was if Ms Arroyo would have the "will and resolve [and] find the way and the time to reverse such a demeaning and embarrassing assessment." *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Hundreds flee Army, NPA war in remote areas nationwide

THE CEASEFIRE DEclared by the military isn't holding as hundreds of villagers fled remote communities in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao that have turned into battlegrounds between communist guerrillas and government soldiers.

PATALSIKIN!
UMA
KARAPATAN

WHILE WAR goes on in rural areas, leftist protesters rally in the metropolis to demand for a stop to civil rights abuses. REM ZAMORA

The flight of residents out of fear of getting caught in the crossfire has created temporary communities in shelters where the civilians were brought for safety.

In Surigao del Sur, members of the Manobo tribe again fled their homes as government soldiers refused to leave their village in Tago town that has turned into a war zone.

The plight of the Manobo evacuees has not improved and the drastic change that the war brought to their lives was best illustrated by a Manobo woman giving birth in an evacuation center in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur.

The human rights group Karapatan said An-An Ramos, 34, was already in labor when she, her husband and five children packed their belongings and fled their village in Tago with 19 other Manobo families.

An-An gave birth at the Diocesan Pastoral Center (DPC) in Tandag to a boy. He was named Pascual.

Manobos from other villages have fled, too, after the military refused to heed their plea to leave their communities.

Rev. Modesto Villasanta, Karapatan chair in Surigao del Sur, said the Manobos returned home Dec. 8 but fled again just last Friday as soldiers came again.

The soldiers were escorting officials of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) who were to negotiate with Manobo leaders to allow coal mining by the Philippine National Oil Co. in their communities, according to Villasanta.

At least 100 soldiers, led by a certain Lt. Col. Ben Pedralves, descended on the Manobo villages, he said.

Manobos were being persuaded by soldiers to sign an agreement that would allow PNOC to mine coal in the area, according to the priest.

An agreement signing was set last Sunday but it was cancelled when the Manobos fled their homes and sought shelter in the DPC.

PNOC mined coal in the area in the 1980s.

The 1980s operations also displaced the Manobos who, at that time, sought shelter in the Tandag Diocese.

In General Nakar town, members of the Agta tribe also fled their homes near the slopes of the Sierra Madre as government soldiers brought the anti-insurgency war there.

Ramcey Astoveza, an Agta leader, said his people sought refuge at the Tribal Center for Development Building in Infanta town.

"Most of them decided to leave for the sake of the children," said Astoveza in a phone interview. "They are used to peaceful living in the mountain."

He said the Agtas fled partly to evade recruitment as militiamen.

"We are not warriors. We are simple, peaceful mountain farmers. Bloodbath and violence are alien to our culture," Astoveza said.

Col. Jorge Segovia, head of the Army's 202nd Infantry Brigade operating in Southern Tagalog, said in a phone interview that the counterinsurgency operations would not bring harm to the Agtas.

Segovia said battlegrounds of the past were far from the Agta settlements. "There is no reason for them to worry. Besides, we're only after the … [NPA rebels] and not the tribal people," he said.

He denied the alleged recruitment of tribesmen as militiamen.

Membership is "voluntary," Segovia said. "We could not force them to join the Cafgu because that is against the law."

In a village in MacArthur town, Leyte, at least 20 families fled their homes as the Army sent men and an armored personnel carrier to search for guerrillas who were reported seen in the area.

Lt. Col. Mario Lacurom, 43rd Infantry Battalion commander based in Hibodhibod village, said the guerrillas could be fleeing their base in western Leyte.

"These rebels were running and must have threatened the villagers so they could harvest farm products and coconut to support them," Lacurom said. *Chris Panganiban, Inquirer Mindanao; Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon; and Jani Arnaiz, Inquirer Visayas*

₱3B allotted for highway tainted with WB graft tag

BONTOC, MT. PROVINCE—The national government has set aside P3 billion to complete the rehabilitation of the Halsema Highway and connect the provinces of Benguet, Mt. Province, Kalinga and Ifugao, according to Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog.

Dalog said the completion of repairs on sections of Halsema, a vital artery connecting Cordillera provinces, would depend heavily on funds provided by President Macapagal-Arroyo, not on loans.

"No President has shown so much concern for the province [than Ms Arroyo]," he said.

The completion of Halsema's rehabilitation would benefit farmers because it is the main road used to transport vegetables from Benguet and Mt. Province to Metro Manila and other lowland provinces. Local officials also pin their hopes on the repairs to boost tourism in the region.

Ms Arroyo on Saturday was scheduled to inspect the rehabilitation of the highway's 16-km stretch from Mt. Data in Bauko town to the capital Bontoc. She, however, cancelled her visit to the province that day.

Dalog said the government has set aside P340 million for the repair of that section, called Phase 2 of the Halsema Highway rehabilitation.

Last year, the World Bank cancelled a P800-million loan intended for the rehabilitation of the highway, leaving local governments looking for funds to shoulder the repairs.

Dalog said the national government would release an initial P700 million next year to rehabilitate the highway's stretch from Bontoc to the City of Tabuk, the capital of Kalinga.

Dalog said Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. had promised to fast-track the rehabilitation of the Halsema Highway.

In October, Ebdane suspended government engineers who he blamed for the sloppy concreting of sections of the Halsema Highway.

He discovered that the materials used to build some sections of the highway were below the standards required for road strength. *Desiree Caluza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

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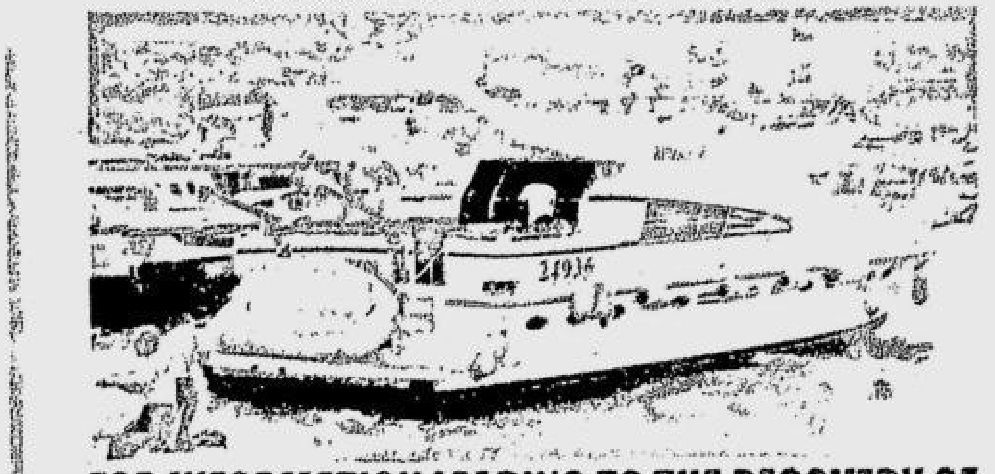

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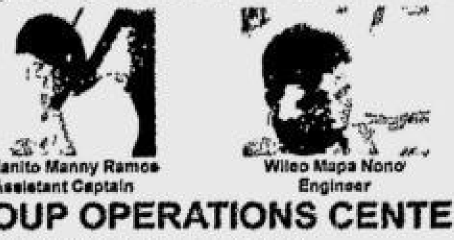
Crew:
Rogelio Bajon Alensuela
Captain



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5 Fernandezes hold council seats in Dagupan

By Gabriel Cardinoza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—AND THEN THERE WERE five.

With the election last week of Carlo Fernandez as Sangguniang Kabataan federation president and the election next week of Lucao barangay captain Lino Fernandez as Liga ng mga Barangay federation president, five Fernandezes will be sitting in the city council when it holds sessions next year.

Carlo, 16, is the eldest grandson of Mayor Alipio Fernandez Jr. and the son of Councilor Alipio Serafin Fernandez.

Mayor Fernandez's nephew, Councilor Michael Fernandez, is also in the city council, which is presided over by Vice Mayor Belen Fernandez.

But Mayor Fernandez, former commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration, dismissed insinuations that he was building a political dynasty.

"They all went through the elections. I didn't even know then that my grandson was running in the SK," the mayor said.

He said he is not related to Vice Mayor Fernandez, whose Chinese father, he noted, adopted the surname "Fernandez" when he was naturalized.

Vice Mayor Fernandez owns the City Supermarket Inc. chain of shopping malls and supermarkets in Pangasinan, La Union, Ilocos Sur and Baguio City.

Mayor Fernandez said barangay captain Fernandez, who, he said, only needed the formality of elections, was a "distant relative."

A NEWLY hatched sea turtle is ready to be set free in San Juan, Batangas. MARLON ALEXANDER LUISTRO/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

Sea turtles find safe haven in Batangas town

SAN JUAN, BATANGAS—ENdangered sea turtles here have found a safe haven in the coastal waters of Tayabas Bay after 31 of the species were released by residents into the bay last Dec. 15.

Residents and youth leaders of Barangay Pinagbayanan in this town released the *pawikan* hatchlings to the bay on Saturday afternoon as a way of restoring their population.

Each of the participants was given a turtle, which they held in their palms before they set the creatures free.

It only took them five minutes to return the hatchlings to their habitat.

Rowena Sayat, resident of Barangay Pinagbayanan, who had monitored the *pawikan* eggs, said she first found the hatched turtles at 3 a.m. on Thursday.

She said it took the turtles at least 59 days before they hatched and emerged from the sand.

Depending on weather conditions, the *pawikan* eggs are usually expected to hatch from 45 to 60 days.

The event is part of a project called "Pawikan Pauwiin sa Karagatan" organized by the group Mother Earth. *Marlon Alexander Luistro, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

GMA lifts hopes of Sumilao farmers

From page A1

sion," Padillo said, but added that he did not wish to preempt Ms Arroyo in announcing the result of the meeting, possibly tomorrow. He said it would be just and would include a moral dimension to the solution.

Early Tuesday afternoon, riot police dropped their truncheons and instead offered roses and water to the farmers and scores of their supporters at Mendiola Bridge in their second attempt to march on Malacañang in two weeks to press their demand for the return of 144 hectares of land in Bukidnon.

San Miguel Corp. is developing the land it acquired from the Quisumbing family, which had sold the property after failing to keep its promise to turn it into an agricultural paradise. However, SMC is converting the land into a pig farm, prompting the farmers' demand for the return of the property under the administration's land reform program.

Six representatives of the farmers, along with several lawyers, churchmen and nongovernment representatives, met with the President in Malacanang. Ms Arroyo hugged some of the farmers, before she sat down for an hour to listen to their plight.

Even before the late night meeting, Cerge Remonde, chief of the Presidential Management Staff, said that Ms Arroyo was "leaning toward a profarmer policy."

Remonde and Apostol, who were present during the afternoon meeting, told the INQUIRER that Ms Arroyo was inclined to grant the wish of the farmers to regain a 144-hectare property that was being developed by San Miguel Corp. (SMC).

"The discussion is going smoothly here," Remonde said in a text message during the afternoon dialogue.

When asked if awarding the land to the farmers would be Ms Arroyo's gift to them, Remonde said: "Looks like (it)."

At press time, Palace officials said they expected a "major breakthrough" in the decade-old battle of the farmers to obtain ownership of the land that had been earlier awarded to them under the agrarian reform program.

Heart-to-heart talk

In the afternoon meeting, the farmers handed to the President a letter from Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, who was not present.

"During their heart-to-heart meeting, the farmers expressed their hopes and aspirations which Bukidnon Gov. Jose Zubiri Jr. endorsed," Bunye said, recalling that "individually, all six of them, recounted their aspirations."

The farmers, accompanied by scores of supporters, were fetched by Bunye and Remonde from the San Beda University chapel, where they heard Mass prior to meeting Ms Arroyo.

Members of the Manila Police District at Mendiola Bridge met the farmers and distributed two dozen red roses and bottles of mineral water "to comfort them and quench their thirst," said Chief. Supt. Roberto Rosales.

Police, armed with truncheons and shields, on Dec. 17 had blocked the marchers on their way to Malacañang.

Hog farm opposed

Farmers Napoleon, Eugene and Samuel Merida, Gary Galarrita, Linda Ligmon and Hilda Sam-ahon represented the 150 families demanding ownership of the disputed property in Sumilao, Bukidnon, which will be turned by an SMC subsidiary into a hog farm.

They were accompanied by lawyers Arlene Pag-ao and Marlon Manuel, nongovernment organization representative Jane Capacio, Bishops Pabillo and Claver and Fathers Danny Huang and Anton Pascual.

Besides Bunye, Remonde and Apostol, also present at the meeting were Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral and Presidential Adviser on Eclessiastical Affairs Conrado "Dodie" Limcauco.

Groundwork

Apostol said that at the afternoon meeting, "Practically, we have laid the groundwork for finalization (of an agreement on land ownership). But it might be finalized tonight or not."

Asked about the bone of contention, he said: "What do they want? What they want really is to give (back) the land to them."

Apostol said there was a free-flowing discussion, but "the President would like to talk to some bishops" in the evening meeting.

Bunye said "a number of issues" would have to be discussed in the second meeting.

"But what was clear (is that) there was no disagreement (on the issues raised by the farmers). We just find out what happens during the subsequent meeting," he said.

Bunye stressed that the farmers were able to "release" their grievances in Ms Arroyo's presence.

Decisive action

Napoleon Merida Jr., chair of the San Vicente Landless Farmers Association and leader of the marchers, had said prior to the meeting that if through their walk they were able to convince the church people of "the righteousness and sincerity of our cause, we are hopeful that we can likewise convince the President so that she will take decisive action to resolve our case."

SEMINARIANS lock arms and provide the "muscle" as the Sumilao farmers continue with their quest to regain their land in Bukidnon province. REM ZAMORA

Ms Arroyo had allotted the entire afternoon for the meeting.

Earlier in the day, she attended the orientation on infant and young child feeding for medical directors and chiefs of hospitals at the Manila Hotel.

She later proceeded to Pasay City and led the distribution of rice under the government's Christmas rice program and had an informal interaction with officials from Zones 17, 18 and 19 at the Malibay Sports Complex Plaza.

After meeting the farmers, Ms Arroyo led the oath-taking and hosted a dinner for the newly elected officials of the Malacañang League of Barangays in the Palace at 8 p.m.

Sale to SMC disputed

The farmers—members of or descended from Bukidnon's indigenous Higaonon community—are disputing the sale of the property by the Quisumbing family to San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), insisting that the land should be subjected to land reform.

They walked 1,700 km from Barangay San Vicente in Sumilao to Manila to convince the government to stop the conversion of the land, where the primary income was growing corn, into a hog farm by SMFI.

They had camped out in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) central office in Quezon City since reaching Manila on Dec. 3. This was where they had set out yesterday to march on Malacañang.

The land case is up for DAR resolution after it was remanded by Malacañang on Nov. 22.

Status quo order

The Sumilao farmers asked the President to reverse the status quo order that Pangandaman issued on Wednesday ordering the farmers to respect SMFI's ownership and possession of the land and allow SMFI to proceed with ongoing farm development activities.

SMFI planned to build a multibillion-peso state-of-the-art vertically integrated agro-industrial estate for Sumilao. It will be equipped with modern feed mills, poultry and piggery farms, wastewater treatment facilities, a reservoir and provisions for forest development.

It said the blueprint was done in consultation with the farmers, who have since joined the protest movement.

Agro-industrial estate

SMFI said that to date, 21 of 40 buildings that would make up the agro-industrial estate had been completed. Investment in Sumilao will amount to an estimated P2.4 billion, which it said was far greater than any projected future value of the land.

Bag-ao said the order was "completely unacceptable" to the farmers who want SMFI to stop all activities on the property pending the DAR's resolution of the case.

Fellow lawyer Manuel said the facts of the case remained "plain and simple" since the land was awarded to the farmers through the issuance of collective land ownership awards (CLOAs).

The Sumilao land dispute was triggered by the move of Norberto Quisumbing, who then owned the land, to apply for conversion and proposed a five-year development plan.

Malacañang subsequently approved the conversion based on the proposed plan.

The farmers protested the land conversion, but the Supreme Court upheld the order, and the CLOAs of the farmers were cancelled.

Supreme Court decision

The farmers argued that Quisumbing did not implement the development plan, thus violating the terms of the conversion order. They said that the conversion period had lapsed but Quisumbing still sold the land to SMFI in 2002.

The farmers said SMFI did not comply with the conversion either, so the land should now be covered under CARP and redistributed to the farmers.

On Wednesday, Pangandaman said there were several unassailable facts that would guide him in deciding on the farmers' demand to issue a cease-and-desist order against the construction of a hog farm on the property by SMFI.

He said that the conversion order issued by Malacañang in 1994 and upheld by the Supreme Court in 1999 still stands, and that the CARP law did not state that a new owner of a disputed property was bound by the conversion pledges made by the previous owner.

Pangandaman also noted that the sale of the property to SMFI appeared aboveboard. *With reports from Allison W. Lopez and Jerome Aning*

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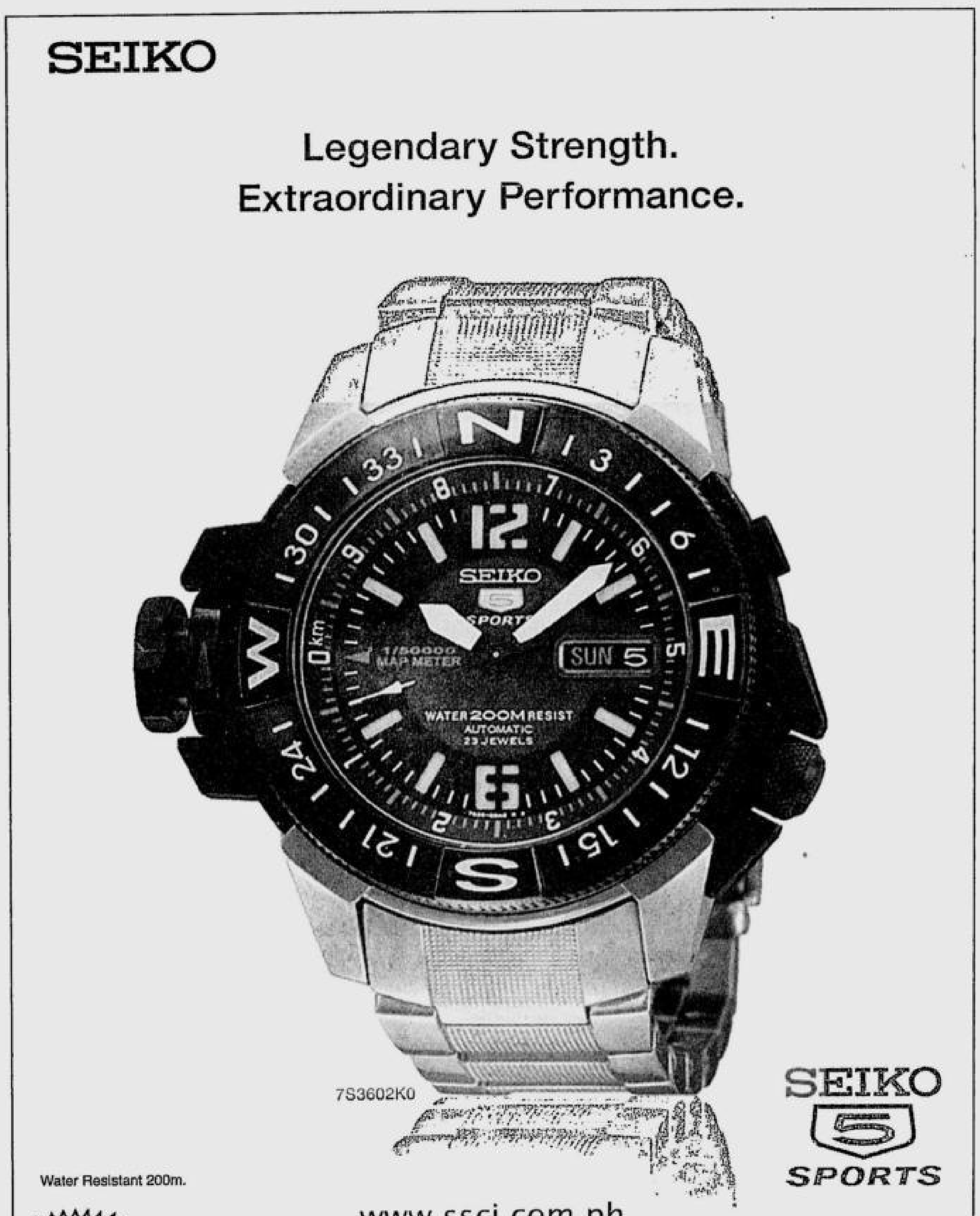

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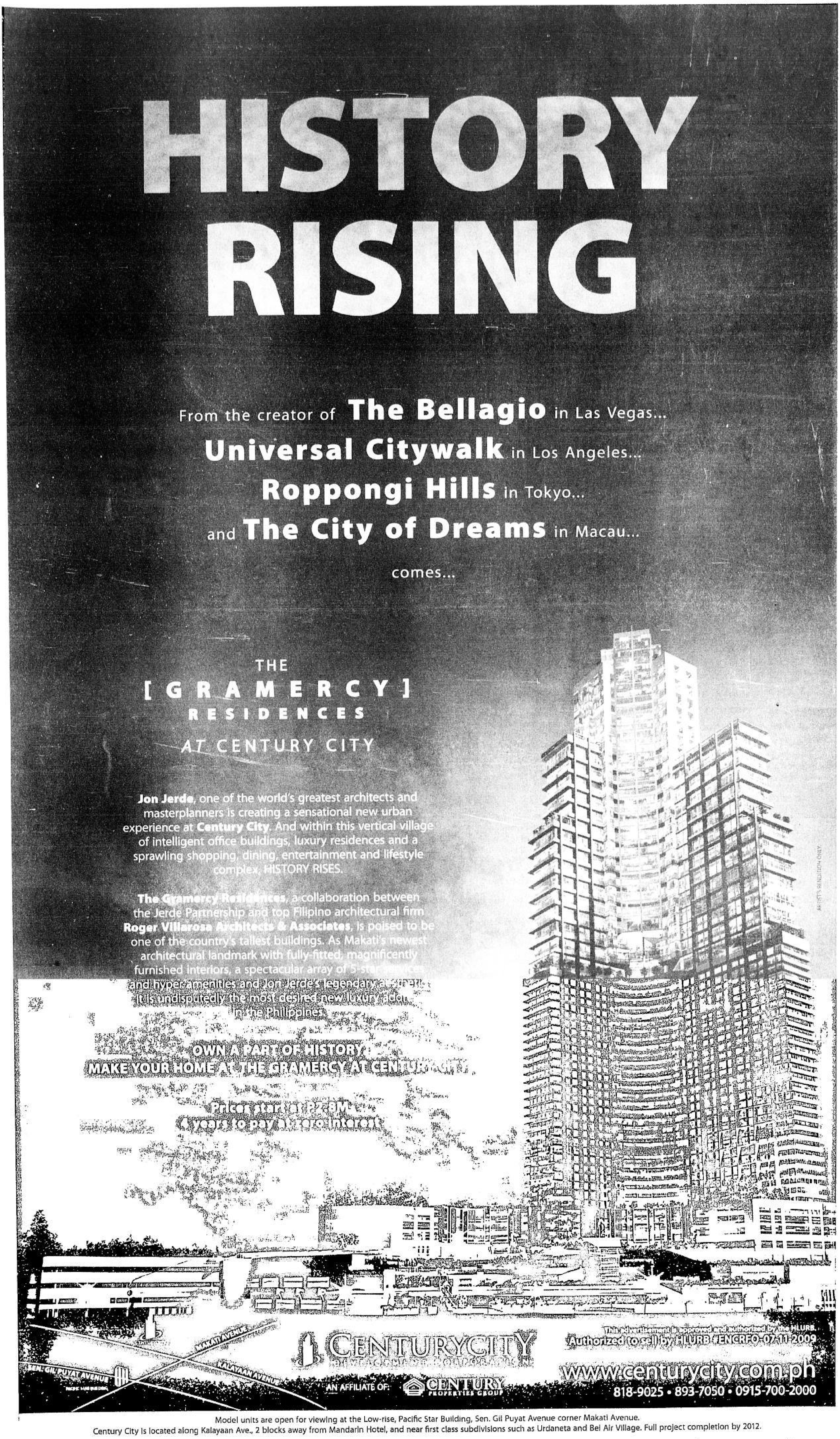

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The night the lights went out on Policarpio

By Kristine L. Alave

THE USUALLY brightly lit Policarpio Street in Mandaluyong City is dimmer now, with only five of the 30 houses decked out in Christmas lights. NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ARE not as bright this year on Policarpio Street in Mandaluyong City.

Unruly crowds and rising power costs have forced most of the residents in the area not to put up their usual extravagant displays for the holidays, drawing a significantly smaller and disappointed crowd who were used to seeing the small street tucked inside the city all aglow every holiday season.

Anastacio Lagman, security director of the Policarpio Residents Association, said the majority of homeowners opted for a "toned down" Christmas because the huge crowds attracted petty criminals to the area.

He added that the thousands of nightly visitors also resulted in property damage, with some residents complaining of cars with scratch marks and wrecked flower beds.

Lagman said the holiday rush also wreaked havoc on their daily schedules, with most of them unable to sleep until after the crowds had thinned out.

The bazaar in the area also compounded their security problems. This year, those who wanted to do business had to set up their stalls near the gates. "We've also cut back on electricity so the displays are fewer," he said.

Lagman clarified that the association did not prevent other homeowners from setting up their Christmas displays, a practice in the past 10 years.

When the lights were turned on last Saturday, much later than the old mid-November schedule, only five of the 30 houses in the street were

THE NIGHT/A20

Text came too late for cops after robbers

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A TEXT MESSAGE WHICH DID NOT ARrive on time yesterday prevented the police from setting up a blocking force for nine motorcycle-riding armed men who had just robbed a steel factory in Valenzuela City.

As a result, the police were caught unprepared and the suspects were able to get away.

Before escaping, the suspects fired at two policemen with their M-16 rifles, leaving them wounded.

Chief Supt. Pedro Tango, Northern Police District director, said SP02 Juanito Lazaro and P03 Robert Vecida, members of the NPD Investigation and Intelligence Division, sustained several gunshot wounds. The two were waiting for instructions on where to position themselves when the suspects chanced upon them.

Both were rushed to the hospital for treatment and were later declared out of danger by doctors.

Tango said that three of the suspects were also wounded.

"We are now scouring all hospitals in Metro Manila and nearby areas in search of the suspects," he said.

According to the NPD director, they received a text message from a concerned citizen about a robbery at the Top Mark Steel Corp. located in the Sacred Heart compound on San Diego Street, Canumay West at around 9 a.m.

Based on reports, the nine suspects barged inside the establishment, hogtied all the personnel inside and divested them of their cell phones, cash and other valuables.

DIID chief Senior Supt. Rafael Santiago said that had they received the text message in real time, they would have been able to set up a blocking force.

Tango, meanwhile, said they had identified the leader of the group, a certain Gilbert, who was allegedly behind a bank robbery in Quezon City last October.

Isafp invitation to Roldan gets flak from group

By Kristine L. Alave

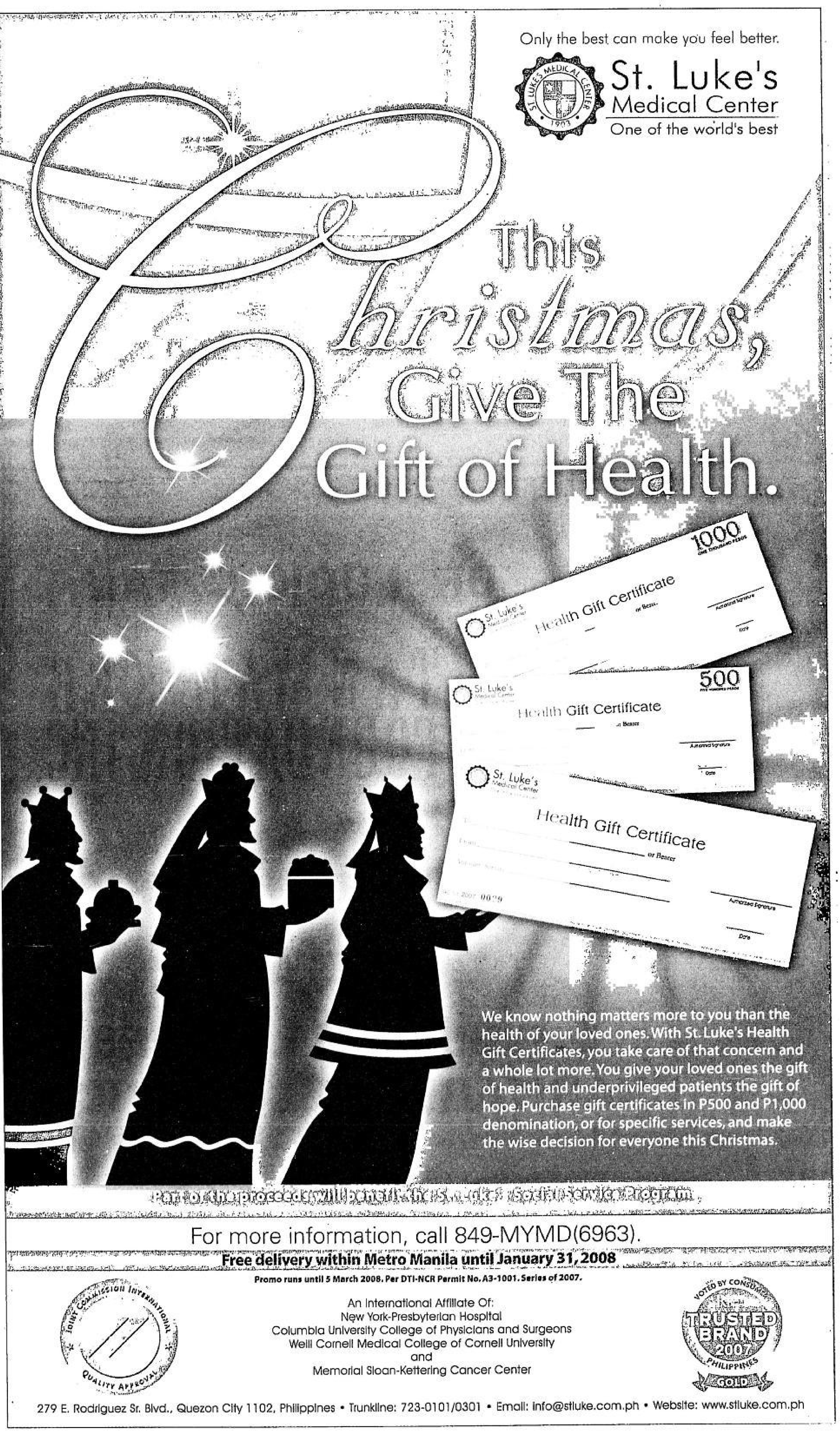
SHAME ON YOU.

This was the message of an anticrime group leader to the military's intelligence division for inviting as inspirational speaker Dennis Roldan, a former Quezon City congressman and actor who is being tried for allegedly kidnapping a 3-year-old boy.

Teresita Ang See, spokesperson of the Citizen's Action Against Crime and Corruption, yesterday castigated the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for its "insensitivity" when it invited Roldan to grace its flag-raising rites on Dec. 3. She said the Isafp should publicly apologize for its "sickening" action.

"It is a big blow to us anticrime advocates and even more to the victims of kidnapping who have been traumatized by their ordeal," she said in a statement.

Roldan, who has professed his innocence, is out on bail while his case is being heard in a Pasig City court.



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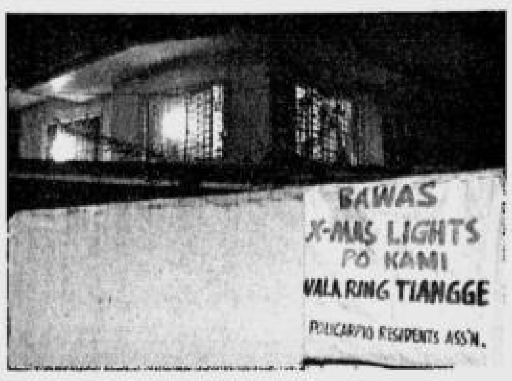

HOMEOWNERS say the higher cost of electricity and the unruly crowd prompted them to tone down their holiday display this year.

NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

The night the lights...

From page A19

decked out in holiday décor.

One of the houses owned by the Dalisay family was covered in Tivoli lights. Even their water tower was transformed into a golden tree, with a star on top.

Another house featured Santa Clauses in different sizes.

Normalyn Lim, one of the five homeowners who chose to "go on with the show," said she and the other "holdouts" wanted to continue making people feel the joy of Christmas.

Even though their electric bill more than doubles every December, Lim said the expression on people's faces when they see the lights makes it all worth it.

"It's already a tradition," she said. "The people always come to Policarpio during Christmas, even though life is hard."

Both Lim and Lagman admitted that Christmas in the area this year is not as festive as before. "It's sad," Lim said.

She added that even Mayor Benhur Abalos was disappointed over the residents' decision to tone down their displays, saying Policarpio Street had become a major tourist attraction in Mandaluyong City during the holidays.

Nes Serseña, a resident, said it was unfortunate that it was dimmer in the area this year. She added that her family always made it a point to go to the street every year to feel the holidays.

Lagman admitted that they have received reports that people were disappointed at the fewer displays. "Maybe they are not used to it," he said.

Asked if there was hope for seeing a decked out Policarpio Street next Christmas, Lagman only shrugged. Now that he and his neighbors have felt a peaceful holiday season, it's hard to turn back, he said.

'Unsafe' venue delays ballot box inventory in Pasig City

By Kristine L. Alave

THE INVENTORY OF BALLOT boxes from 1,317 precincts in Pasig City was delayed yesterday after the local Commission on Elections said the space designated for the activity was "unsafe."

Ma. Anne Gonzales, the city's election supervisor, said they could not proceed with the inventory and sealing of the ballot boxes because she was still in the process of securing the place.

The Comelec Second Division earlier ordered a recount of the votes from the 1,317 precincts after former Pasig City Rep. Robert "Dudut" Jaworski Jr. filed an electoral protest, questioning the victory of Robert Eusebio in the May 14 mayoral elections.

Based on the Comelec's tally, Eusebio garnered 116,463 votes against Jaworski's 107,141 votes.

Gonzales said she asked the Comelec main office in Intramuros, Manila to postpone the inventory that was supposed to start yesterday until the Pasig City sports complex becomes available for their use.

Gonzales said the city government is using the site as a distribution center for its Christmas outreach program.

While the local Comelec is waiting for the order from the head office, Gonzales said she has started preparations for the inventory which would be conducted in an open space near the sports complex.

The poll chief said she has asked the engineering office to build makeshift tents for their use and the traffic management office to clear the area of passing vehicles.

"It is making me nervous because it's an open space. But we have to follow and treat this as a hazard in the profession," Gonzales said.

Should the Comelec deny their request for extension, Gonzales said they would start the inventory and the sealing of the ballot boxes today.

The ballot boxes would then be shipped to the Comelec office in Manila for the actual recount.

The Pasig City mayoralty was one of the hotly contested posts in Metro Manila in the last May 14 national and local elections.

Eusebio and Jaworski, who both belong to administration parties, hurled accusations of vote buying and massive poll cheating against each other from the start of the campaign period until the canvassing.

Most corrupt label: How Marcos would have reacted

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

IF FERDINAND MARCOS WERE president and the government were in the pre-martial law era, he would have worried no end over the results of a Pulse Asia survey finding him the most corrupt president of the country.

But our president is Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who doesn't give a hoot what people think about her governance.

The results of a recent Pulse Asia survey of people's perception of GMA as the most corrupt president seem to have had no effect on her.

No amount of criticisms from the public and media will ever daunt Ms Arroyo because she knows the "stars" favor her.

She knows that people are tired of having another "Edsa." She has the complete backing of the military. She has the backing of the House of Representatives. She has the backing of local government officials.

In short, while Marcos would have hung his head in shame over the Pulse Asia survey, Ms Arroyo goes about her business seemingly unaffected by all the brickbats thrown her way.

The sentiment in Malacañang is that Ms Arroyo is no longer up for reelection, so why should she worry about the people's perception?

* * *

I was able to have a glimpse firsthand of how Marcos reacted to an adverse report about his government. My comments were contained in a column item I wrote in the then Bulletin Today in 1983 in the aftermath of the assassination of Ninoy Aquino.

In that Bulletin column, quoting unnamed airport sources, I wrote that a certain Fe Gimenez, who turned out to be a member of Marcos' "Kitchen Cabinet," boarded a plane at the Manila International Airport carrying an undetermined amount of dollars.

That was the time when the value of the dollar vis-à-vis the peso had gone up drastically as a result of Ninoy's assassination.

Apparently, the Marcoses were already panicking and sending out money abroad, but the people didn't know at that time.

President Marcos read my column and called up Pat Gonzales, then the executive editor of the Bulletin, to expect a reaction from Malacañang.

Pat called me to his office and told me my column for the following day had been preempted. He said that as we were talking, Marcos was writing my column for me.

It would be made to appear that I wrote the column, based on a reaction from Malacañang.

"Mon, the President is worried about the repercussions your column has made on his government.

Imagine, the President is now your ghost writer!" Pat told me excitedly.

At that time, the Bulletin was the No. 1 newspaper. (The INQUIRER came out much later. —RT)

Whatever news or column item that came out of the paper, although it was operating under severe constraints, was taken seriously by Marcos himself.

Remember that at that time, Marcos held people by the neck, and yet, ironically, was concerned about what they thought about him.

* * *

What's Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's reaction to adverse reports about her?

During the early days of her administration and before the 2004 national elections, Ms Arroyo also worried about the people's perception of her as a leader.

She held regular conferences with her staff and publicists on how to improve her image. I attended one or two of such meetings in Malacañang.

But I notice that after weathering the "Hello Garci" scandal, she no longer worries over reports in the media about how she is running the government.

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Saudi king pardons girl sentenced to 200 lashes

RIYADH—SAUDI ARABIA'S KING Abdullah has pardoned a teenage girl sentenced to six months in jail and 200 lashes after being gang raped, Al Jazirah newspaper reported on Monday.

The ruling against the 19-year-old girl in the ultra-conservative Muslim kingdom had attracted widespread international condemnation, including from human rights groups and the White House.

The Arabic language daily said it had been informed of the royal pardon from its own unidentified sources.

But in the same article, the kingdom's Justice Minister Abdullah bin Mohammad bin Ibrahim al-Sheikh told the paper the king had the "right to overrule court judgements if he considered it benefiting the greater good."

The girl, who was 18 at the time she was raped, was attacked at knifepoint by seven men after she was found in a car with a male companion who was not a relative, in breach of strict Saudi law.

Her identity has not been revealed but she has become known as "Qatif girl," after the Shiite-populated area of Al-Qatif in the Eastern Province from which she comes.

In October 2006, a judge sentenced her to 90 lashes for being with the man—a taboo in the conservative Muslim kingdom which imposes segregation of the sexes.

She appealed against the sentence but despite her ordeal the court ruled that her punishment should be increased to 200 lashes and a six-month jail term.

The judges decided to punish the woman further for "her attempt to aggravate and influence the judiciary through the media," a court source told the English-language daily Arab News.

The rapists were initially sentenced to one to five years in jail, but those terms were also toughened in November to between two and nine years.

A rape conviction carries the death penalty in Saudi Arabia, but the court did not impose it due to the "lack of witnesses" and the "absence of confessions," the justice ministry said last month.

The court also revoked the license of the woman's lawyer, who has also been summoned by the justice ministry to appear before a disciplinary panel. *AFP*

Nearly 2 million Muslims begin hajj pilgrimage

MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA—NEARLY two million Muslim faithful set off Monday from Mecca to the valley of Mina as the annual hajj pilgrimage got under way in Saudi Arabia amid tight security.

The pilgrims, wearing white robes, walked or boarded buses to Mina, 5 kilometers east of the holy city of Mecca, to begin tracing the journey made by the Prophet Muhammad more than 1,400 years ago.

Pilgrims will spend the day in prayers and meditation in Mina, sleeping at night in tents before heading further south to Mount Arafat, where the Prophet is believed to have received the last passage of Islam's holy book, the Koran.

The hajj climaxes on Tuesday, when the faithful will spend the day praying and asking God's forgiveness at the summit.

Among this year's pilgrims is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the first president of the Islamic republic to take part in the event.

"If I made a mistake or in one of my speeches or said something that was not in line with the interest of the nation and has hurt the nation or I was not able to defend its rights, then I ask people to forgive me," Ahmadinejad said late Sunday before his departure, Iranian state media reported.

He will join other pilgrims in carrying out a series of sacred rituals, which includes walking counter-clockwise seven times around the Kaaba, a cube-shaped structure in Mecca toward which Muslims pray.

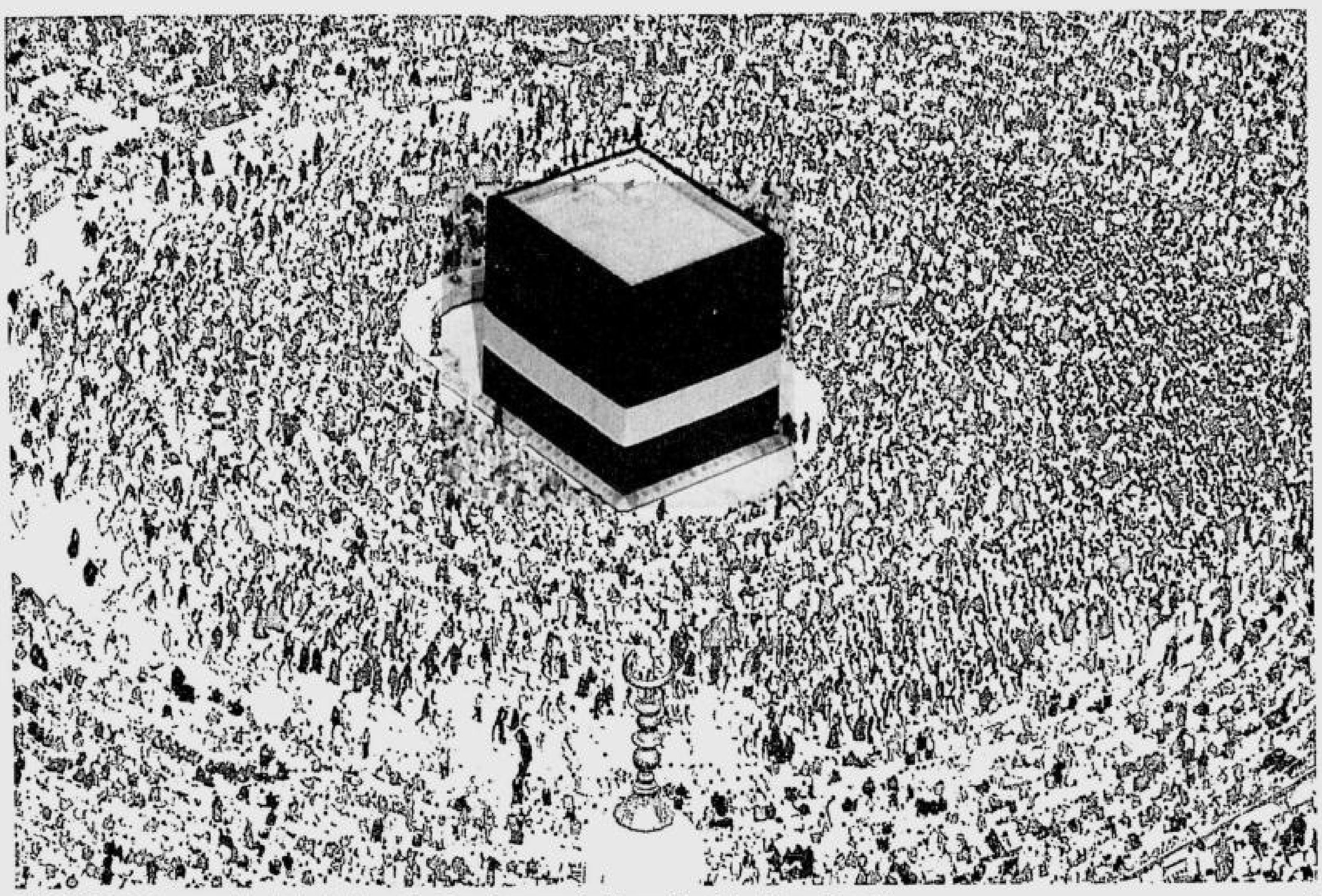
Ahmadinejad's presence is seen as helping to ease the sometimes rocky relations between largely-Shiite Iran and Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia.

Security has been stepped in a bid to control the immense crowds, as Saudi authorities hope to prevent the high death tolls that have often characterized past pilgrimages.

In 2006, 364 people were killed in a stampede at the entrance of the Jamarat Bridge, where pilgrims traditionally cast stones at a pillar representing Satan.

A third level has been added to the bridge for this year's pilgrimage, designed to ease the flow of pilgrims. Saudi officials say the crossing can now handle more than 200,000 people an hour.

The pilgrimage, which ends on Friday, is one of the five pillars of Islam and is an obligation for all able-bodied Muslims at least once during their lives if they can afford it. *AFP*



MUSLIMS circle around the holy Kaaba at the Grand mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia on Dec. 16. AP

Russia delivers first nuke fuel to Iran

MOSCOW—RUSSIA HAS DELIVERED the first shipment of nuclear fuel to Iran's Bushehr nuclear power station, the Russian state agency building the station said in a statement on Monday.

Russia's foreign ministry said separately it had received additional written assurances from Iran that the fuel would not be used for any other purpose and urged Tehran to drop its own enrichment programme.

"The first stage (of delivering fuel) was completed on Dec. 16, 2007: Containers with fuel which had previously been sealed by IAEA inspectors were delivered to the site and placed in special storage," plant constructor Atomstroiexport said.

The delivery of fuel is likely to have far-reaching diplomatic repercussions because the United States and other countries, which suspect Iran of harboring ambitions to acquire a nuclear weapon, have urged Moscow not to despatch the fuel.

Tehran says its nuclear programme is designed purely to generate electricity. Russia says Bushehr is being built in line with guidelines set by the United Nation's nuclear watchdog and there is no risk of Iran acquiring military technology. *Reuters*

WHO urges vigilance as bird flu flares in Asia

HANOI, VIETNAM—THE WORLD Health Organization warned on Monday that countries should be on alert for bird flu because it is again on the move, with Pakistan reporting new infections and Burma (Myanmar) logging its first human case.

"The key to the public health response is surveillance," said Peter Cordingley, spokesperson for the WHO Western Pacific region in Manila. "If we do actually get to the cases with antivirals early on, the health outcome is a lot better."

WHO experts arrived in Pakistan to try to sort out cases reported there, South Asia's first human infections. They were expected to visit a hospital and affected areas Tuesday, said WHO country representative Khalif Bile in Islamabad.

"They are here to get more information and to provide more support in the case of any potential risk," he said, adding that the health ministry, agriculture ministry and WHO are now working closely together following a "communication gap" when the government did not immediately report suspected cases to WHO.

Four brothers and two cousins fell ill last month in Abbotabad, a small city north of Islamabad, while three others who slaughtered poultry in the same area and a nearby town tested positive for the H5N1 bird flu virus earlier this month.

Two of the brothers died, but specimens were collected from only one. *AP*

'LEADER OF THE BAND'; 56

Dan Fogelberg, the singer and songwriter whose hits "Leader of the Band" and "Same Old Lang Syne" helped define the soft-rock era, died Dec. 16 at his home in Maine after battling prostate cancer. He was 56. AP

Japan sends notices of missing pension records to 8.5M people

TOKYO—JAPAN BEGAN SENDING WARNINGS to an estimated 8.5 million people on Monday that their pension data may have gone missing, as the government seeks to clean up a scandal that has damaged its credibility.

The government has acknowledged losing track of pension records linked to 64 million claims.

The disclosure earlier this year ignited a scandal that saw the ruling party lose control of parliament's upper house in July elections, and eroded public confidence in the ability of the world's second largest economy to support its growing legions of elderly.

The Social Insurance Agency sent notices linked to about 300,000 claims Monday, agency official Sueji Miura said. The agency anticipates follow-up mailings through the end of March that will bring the total to around 11 million claims involving 8.5 million people, he said.

Recipients need to verify their pension and related personal information recorded by the government, make any necessary additions or corrections and return the notice along with supporting documents, he said. Those with no changes to make are asked to return an included postcard.

From next April, the government will also send notices to over 100 million people to try to match the remaining 53 million outstanding claims, Miura said.

"We are making and will continue to make every effort to see that each and every person conclusively gets back the pension funds they are owed," Health and Welfare Minister Yoichi Masuzoe told reporters.

The mess helped to drive former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe out of office, and has continued to make life difficult for his successor, Yasuo Fukuda.

Fukuda's government has faced criticism that a failure to resolve the pension problem would be considered a breach of public pledges that the ruling party made during July's electoral campaign. *AP*

Seoul MPs vote to probe election front-runner

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREA'S PARLIAMENT on Monday voted to launch a new probe into fraud allegations against presidential opposition front-runner Lee Myung-bak, two days before the country goes to the polls.

A specially appointed independent lawyer will investigate claims including share-rigging, faking documents and embezzlement against Lee, the favorite in Wednesday's polls, after fresh video evidence came to light.

Analysts said Lee is still expected to win Wednesday's election, but that the affair would cloud his first months in office.

It was unclear when the new probe would start. If elected, he would assume office on Feb. 25 and as president would have immunity from prosecution.

The business-friendly Lee, 65, was cleared on Dec. 5 of a major fraud allegedly engineered by his business partner and linked to the BBK investment firm.

However, government allies accused prosecutors of bias and pushed for an independent probe.

Some 160 lawmakers voted in favor of appointing the special counsel, with none against. Lee's conservative Grand National Party (GNP) did not take vote.

"The motion on appointing an independent counsel has been passed," a parliamentary official told AFP.

LEE REUTERS

Pressure to reopen the probe was spurred Sunday with the release of a video clip recorded in 2000 in which Lee appears to say he founded BBK. He had previously denied involvement in the firm.

Lee, a 65-year-old former construction executive, is seen by many as the candidate best suited to reinvigorate the economy after years of relatively modest growth.

When the deadline for opinion polls expired last week, he was almost 30 percentage points ahead of his closest rival.

The video clip came to light after police arrested three men for trying to extort three billion won ($3.2 million) from the GNP in return for withholding it. *AFP*

Faster microchips are leaving programmers in their dust

By John Markoff

REDMOND, WASH.—WHEN HE was chief executive of Intel in the 1990s, Andrew S. Grove would often talk about the "software spiral"—the interplay between ever-faster microprocessor chips and software that required ever more computing power.

The potential speed of chips is still climbing, but now the software they run is having trouble keeping up. Newer chips with multiple processors require dauntingly complex software that breaks up computing chores into chunks that can be processed at the same time.

The challenges have not dented the enthusiasm for the potential of the new parallel chips at Microsoft, where executives are betting that the arrival of many-core chips—processors with more than eight cores, possible as soon as 2010—will transform the world of personal computing.

The company is mounting a major effort to improve the parallel computing capabilities in its software.

"Microsoft is doing the right thing in trying to develop parallel software," said Andrew Singer, a veteran software designer who is a cofounder of Rapport Inc., a parallel computing company based in Redwood City, Calif. "They could be roadkill if somebody else figures out how to do this first."

Grove's software spiral started to break down two years ago. Intel's microprocessors were generating so much heat that they were melting, forcing Intel to change direction and try to add computing power by placing multiple smaller processors on a single chip.

Much like adding lanes on a freeway, the new strategy being widely adopted by the entire semiconductor industry works only to the degree that more cars (or computing instructions) can be packed into each lane (or processor).

The stakes are high. The growth of the computer and consumer electronics industries is driven by a steady stream of advances in both hardware and software, creating new ways to handle audio, video, advanced graphics and the processing of huge amounts of data.

"Industry has basically thrown a Hail Mary," said David Patterson, a pioneering computer scientist at the University of California, Berkeley, referring to the hardware shift during a recent lecture. "The whole industry is betting on parallel computing. They've thrown it, but the big problem is catching it." *NYT*

JI leader haled to court

JAKARTA—THE LEADER of Islamic militant network Jemaah Islamiyah was brought to an Indonesian court on Monday to face trial over his activities as part of the group blamed for the deadly Bali bombings.

Zarkasi entered a holding cell at South Jakarta district court amid tight security then spread newspaper sheets across the opening so that photographers could not take his picture, an AFP correspondent saw.

An indictment specifying the exact charges against him was expected to be read out at the start of the trial, slated to begin later Monday.

Police have accused him of controlling JI operations across Indonesia, overseeing the training of its leaders, controlling weapons and ammunition, and managing assignments for attacks in religiously-divided Poso in Sulawesi.

Zarkasi, who has admitted he became the group's leader by default in 2004 as it searched for a more appropriate person to take the reins, has told police he would testify against JI in court.

However when he testified in another accused militant's trial last month, he said he did not understand many of the terms prosecutors were using, meaning he avoided giving answers in full.

He also denied knowledge of specific attacks in Poso and involvement in supplying weapons destined for the area, contrary to an earlier statement he made to police. *AFP*

Britain turns Basra over to Iraqi forces

BAGHDAD—BRITISH FORCES HANDED OVER control of Basra province to Iraq's government on Sunday, giving up military control of the final region under their supervision after four-and-a-half years.

US officials believe the transfer will be a serious test of Iraqi political and military leaders' ability to maintain control of Basra—a strategically vital and politically fractious southern province with a port city of the same name—and prevent Iran or Shiite militias from gaining too much influence.

In a formal ceremony, conducted indoors to avoid mortar attacks from the militias that have battled British forces over the years, Maj. Gen. Graham Binns of the British Army said Iraq was prepared to take over the Basra region, with British forces assuming a much lower profile in a supporting role.

The two most prominent rival groups are the Mahdi Army, led by the anti-American Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a militia affiliated with the political faction of the same name.

After the ceremony, Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Iraq's national security adviser, challenged Basra's provincial and city leaders to stabilize the region.

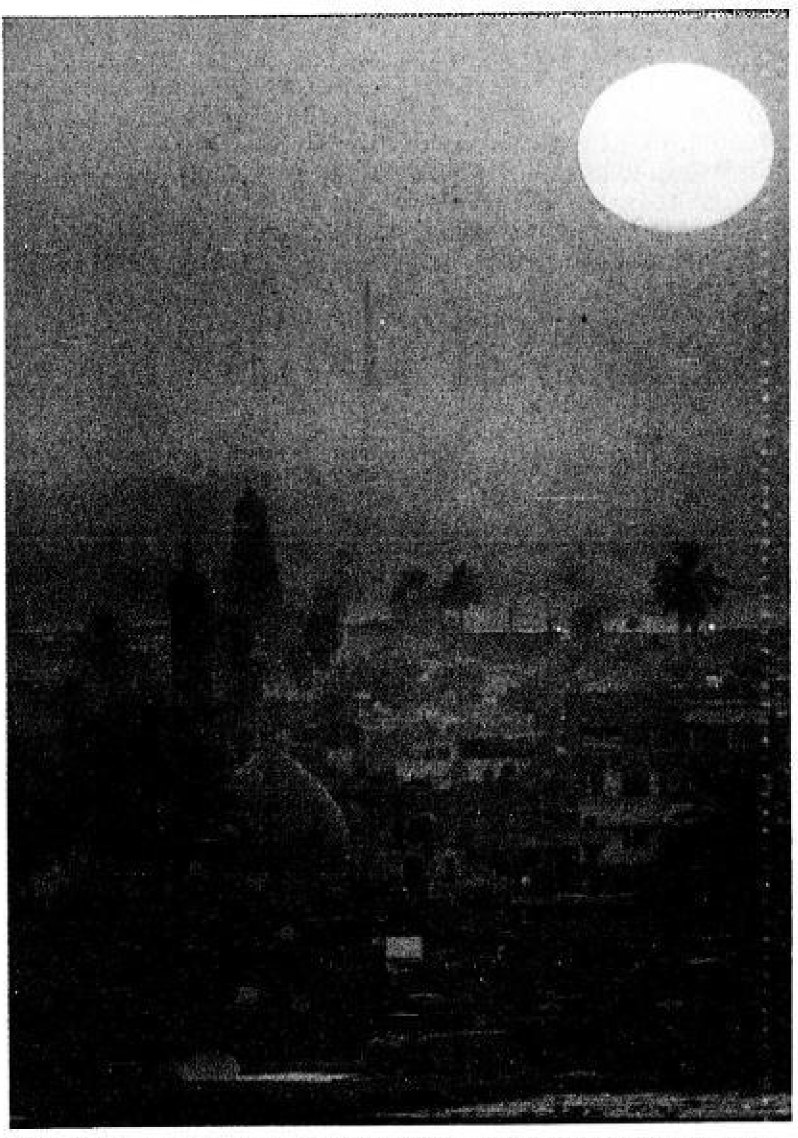
"The security of Basra is one of our main responsibilities," al-Rubaie said. "I address, directly, the governor, the general commander of the security forces in Basra, the provincial council and the people of Basra. Will you agree with militias? Will you engage in corruption? Will you go easy on terrorism?"

Basra is the ninth and most important province to be transferred to Iraqi control by US-led forces since July 2006. Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top US commander in Iraq, said in a statement Sunday that Iraqi forces had "demonstrated their readiness" to take over. But the statement also hinted at the fragile nature of the transfer in achieving a peaceful transition.

Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the day-to-day commander in Iraq, said Sunday that US officials were concerned about whether Iraqi forces would prevent Iran, which shares a border with Basra province, from meddling in the region.

Elsewhere in Iraq on Sunday, fierce fighting erupted in Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad, between Sunni tribesmen who have begun supporting US forces and members of al-Qaida in Mesopotamia, the mostly homegrown insurgent group that US intelligence believes is led by foreigners.

In the seven-hour battle in three villages northeast of Diyala's provincial capital, Baqouba, 35 militants and 18 local residents were killed, according to a police official in Khalis, a Baqouba suburb. *NYT*



THE SUN sets over Baghdad, Aug. 29. Iraq staggers marginally more hopeful into 2008 due to falling violence on the back of a controversial US military surge, but long-term peace between rival political blocs is still a distant dream. AFP

Bill Clinton intensifying his campaign for Hillary

DUNLAP, IOWA—WHEN SEN. Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign advisers laid out their new political strategy in a private conference call with allies on Tuesday, Bill Clinton was not on the line. He did not need to be: The message being delivered was his.

A day earlier, Clinton had unveiled the campaign's new talking points at rallies in Iowa. His wife was "a change agent," "a proven agent of positive change," and "a lifetime advocate of a change agenda." The "change, change, change" phrase, as some advisers call it, was coined by Clinton after he told campaign officials that the old strategy of running as an incumbent-like front-runner was not enough, advisers said. The Clintons had to wrest the message of change from Sen. Barack Obama instead.

On the conference call, the campaign's chief strategist, Mark Penn, reinforced the idea. Clinton is not running his wife's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, but less than three weeks before Clinton's first test in the Iowa caucuses, he has become the most powerful force in her political operation besides the candidate herself. He is shaping strategy, challenging advisers on their assumptions, chiming in on tone and details of news releases, and acting like a vice presidential candidate in a general election—attacking rivals and defending the candidate so Clinton can stay positive much of the time.

Yet as the Clinton campaign has struggled on various fronts over the last six weeks, Clinton has at times been part of the problem. His higher profile in the campaign is again focusing attention on his profoundly mixed legacy, encompassing his skills as a campaigner and the economic boom of the 1990s but also his personal indiscretions and the hostility and derision aimed at him and his wife by much of the Republican Party.

Robert Shrum, a Democratic consultant who was senior strategist to John Kerry in 2004, and has worked with Clinton in the past, said that Clinton is a double-sided asset: Strategically brilliant, but also undisciplined and prone to dominate the spotlight.

More than anything, Clinton is increasingly angry with the news media over what he sees as overly critical coverage of Hillary Clinton and kinder treatment of Obama, according to advisers. *NYT*

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Canada, US hit by huge snowstorm

MONTREAL—A MAJOR SNOWSTORM tore through eastern Canada and northeastern United States on Sunday, killing at least one person, making driving conditions treacherous and forcing airports to cancel numerous flights.

Southern Ontario and Quebec provinces took the brunt of the bad weather, with Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal struggling under 40 centimeters of snow, as the storm continued unabated late Sunday.

Environment Canada warned that "a crippling major winter storm with heavy snow and blowing snow as well as some ice pellets is moving in ... dangerous winter weather conditions are imminent or occurring" in the affected regions.

It told the public to expect delays and disruptions in air and rail services, as the storm tracked northward toward New Brunswick.

In Toronto, the snowstorm caused some 600 traffic accidents on Sunday morning alone, the provincial police reprted.

A woman was killed by a snowplow on a roadside in London, Ontario, police said.

Air Canada recommended its customers check the status of their flights before leaving for the airport, and Rail Canada issued a statement advising the public it was prepared to handle "the increased demand for train tickets."

The same winter storm front also hammered the Great Lakes and northeastern regions of the United States, with winter storm warnings extending from Michigan and Indiana to Maine, the US Weather Channel reported.

A blizzard warning has been issued for southeastern Michigan, north of Detroit, the channel added. *AFP*

CHRISTY Allford walks along a snow-covered Monon Trail in Indianapolis on Dec. 16. AP

Pakistan orders probe of escape of Briton accused of bombing plot

ISLAMABAD—PAKISTAN'S GOVERNMENT on Sunday ordered a high-level investigation into the escape from police custody of a British terror suspect, officials said, as a hunt was launched to track him down.

Rashid Rauf—who is suspected of plotting to blow up airliners bound for the United States from London—was being taken from a court hearing on Saturday when he broke free from his handcuffs and ran off, a senior officer said.

Islamabad police said they were questioning several officers over the disappearance, while an official statement also announced the top-level probe.

The three-member committee includes one officer each from the police and interior ministry and a senior official of the Islamabad administration, the statement released by state media said. It has been told to report within 48 hours.

Earlier interior ministry spokesperson Brig. Javed Cheema told AFP: "Rashid Rauf escaped from police custody and we are making every possible effort to rearrest him."

The police chief of Islamabad, Shahid Nadeem Baluch, told AFP early Sunday: "The hunt is on to track him down. We have conducted some raids but so far there hasn't been any breakthrough."

Rauf, 25, was arrested in central Pakistan in August 2006 and had been behind bars since. The arrest sparked a worldwide security alert and 24 people were detained in Britain in a major swoop.

The following day a massive security alert hit London's Heathrow Airport, with mass cancellations of flights for several days over fears of a terrorist attack. *AFP*

WHAT'S INSIDE

Tiger Woods ends year with a bang / A26

SPORTS

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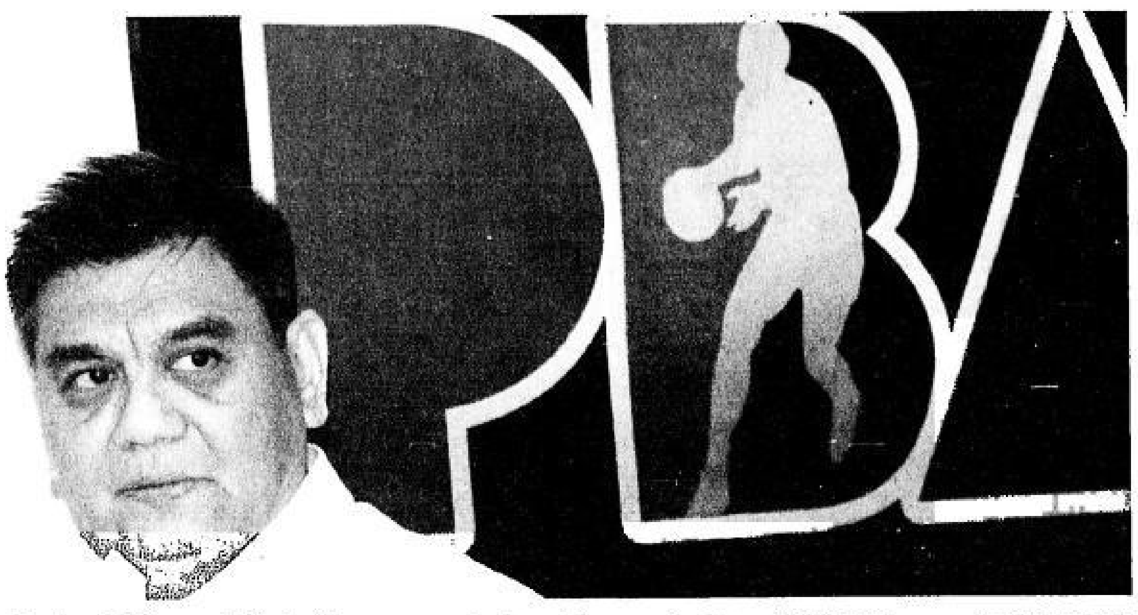

PBA OIC Sonny Barrios: Deferment of selection means nobody got the required two-thirds vote. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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Salud, Ramos left to duke it out for PBA commish post

By June Navarro

EITHER LAWYER CHITO SALUD OR NEXTEL executive Lambert Ramos will be named the next commissioner of the Philippine Basketball Association after the Yuletide season.

This developed after the PBA board of governors decided yesterday to reset judgment day to Jan. 10 following a series of futile balloting that pruned the number of candidates from three to two.

Patrick Gregorio, executive director of the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas, was the last to be stricken off the candidates' list before the deadlock ended the board meeting yesterday.

"The list was trimmed down to two," said PBA officer-in-charge Sonny Barrios. "Unfortunately, after about two and a half hours of deliberation, the board decided to adjourn.

"It means nobody got the required two-thirds vote."

The candidate who earns the nod of at least six of the nine voting members of the board gets the commissioner's post.

Claiming he was not privy to the board deliberation, Barrios declined to reveal the real score.

The INQUIRER, however, learned that the board went through three balloting before finally deciding to defer selection.

According to an INQUIRER source, Gregorio was dropped after getting only one vote in the initial round of balloting.

Ramos and Salud were said to have divided the other eight votes, although neither candidate reached the required six nods.

The succeeding two rounds yielded a stalemate at 5-4, forcing the board to call it a day. The source declined to say who got the five votes.

"I respect it (board's decision)," said Gregorio, who lobbied for the synergy between the national team and the PBA to make Philippine basketball a potent force on the international scene.

"The good Lord has other plans for me. I was selling a vision, the distinguished members of the PBA board did not buy it. Perhaps it (vision) was too radical."

The elder brother of Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio and PBL mentor Allan Gregorio of Mail and More, Gregorio was picked first to make his presentation before the board of governors.

Ramos, who flaunted his marketing expertise, took centerstage next. He also went through a similar interview before leaving in a huff before lunch break.

Then came Salud, the son of former commissioner Rudy Salud who brought the experience of his father with him during the presentation.

Salud broached a "product-centered approach" in running the affairs of the league. He explained that focus would be on the quality of the games since this will either make or break the PBA in the future. Salud also immediately left after his presentation.

Present during the deliberations were PBA chair Tony Chua, Sta. Lucia Realty governor Buddy Encarnado, Joaqui Trillo of Alaska, Barangay Ginebra's Robert Non, lawyer Mamerto Mondragon of Welcoat, Air21's Lito Alvarez, Rene Pardo of Purefoods, Ricky Vargas of Talk 'N Text and Magnolia's Ely Capacio.

Coca-Cola governor JB Baylon sent media relations officer Walter Panganiban as his representative.

Noli Eala resigned as the PBA sixth's commissioner in August after the Supreme Court stripped him of his license to practice law.

In the absence of a commissioner, the PBA board appointed Barrios to run the day-to-day functions of the league. He will remain as OIC until Feb. 29, or for the remainder of the ongoing Smart-PBA Philippine Cup.

Meanwhile, Barrios yesterday summoned Mac Cardona and Harvey Carey of Talk 'N Text and Welcoat's Ryan Araña to his office today to explain their unsportsmanlike conduct in a recent game.

Cardona thwarted a driving Hercules Tangkay with a clothesline tackle during the Phone Pals' 99-96 win over the Dragons while Carey was assessed a technical like Cardona for pushing Tangkay at the height of the altercation.

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US training key to victory

RP swim team's gold medalists all going to Olympics

By Musong R. Castillo

PROUD TO BE PINOYS: From left, Daniel Coakley, James Walsh, Miguel Molina and Ryan Arabejo.

RAFFY LERMA

BANGKOK, THAILAND—THE KEY to success, it seems, does not lie in preparations made at home.

Swimming, the biggest contributor to the Philippines' meager gold medal cache, drew its strength from tankers who trained in the United States.

Together, they put away all the RP team's gold medals in the pool at the just-concluded 24th Southeast Asian Games in faraway Nakhon Ratchasima province.

Eight of the paltry 41 golds won by the country in the 11-nation, biennial conclave came from the sport, with Miguel Molina winning three titles and sharing in the victory of a relay quartet.

Molina, the 23-year-old who holds a degree in human relations from the University of California at Berkeley, has trained in the US ever since the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association plucked him from age-group competitions early in his career.

He became the saving grace for the battered RP delegation at the Games by winning the Most Valuable Player (male) award, the third such time the prestigious citation has been bestowed on a Filipino.

The two others who won the plum were also swimmers—Eric Buhain in 1991 and Akiko Thomson in 1989.

"We make sure that they (RP swimmers) become good enough to be offered scholarships in the US, so they can train there," Mark Joseph, also a former national swimmer and now president of the Pasa, said.

"With that, we know that they are in good hands. We simply don't have the technology that they have there (in the US)," added Joseph, also the deputy secretary-general of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Asked why only the Fil-Americans in the team shone for the Philippines, Joseph said his charges were all pure Filipinos.

He said the gold medalists were "100 percent Filipinos who just happened to be born somewhere else and then trained in the US because that is the Mecca of swimming."

"I trained in the US, so did Ral (Rosario) and Eric (Buhain), but we were never called Fil-Ams," Joseph explained.

Singapore, which pipped the Philippines for fifth overall and sealed the worst RP finish ever in the games, also trains its finest swimmers abroad.

"What we have achieved—a big number of silver and bronze medals—tells us that they (opponents) prepared better than we did," Philippine Sports Commissioner chair William "Butch" Ramirez said.

Not only did Molina—who was born in Japan to Filipino parents—Ryan Arabejo, JB Walsh and Daniel Coakley win gold medals in the SEAG, they are now all going to the Olympics in Beijing next year.

"We know that we can compete in the world level," said Joseph. "What we really need is to fund these people because their scholarships don't cover their travel expenses."

Joseph said that he had written the PSC at least three times to fund Molina's training for the Beijing Olympics, which costs about $3,000 (about P123,000) a month.

Molina has left school and now needs to enter a personal training program under renowned swim coach Dave Salo.

The Pasa president is hopeful that someone from the private sector would step forward and foot Molina's bill.

Coakley, the 6-foot-1, 17-year-old great grandson of two-time Olympic bronze medalist Teofilo Yldefonso, was the fastest man in the pool after shattering the SEAG's 50-meter freestyle mark.

He plans to move out of Hawaii to train and study, along with Arabejo, at Bolles school and be under the guidance of Sergio Lopez, the former Olympic gold medalist from Spain.

SPORTSWATCH

Bicol Saro spikers shine

BICOL SARO ROUTED SAINT FRANCIS DE Assisi College, 21-13, 21-13, to rule the 1st Maes Maes National Invitational Championship last Sunday at the Imus Pilot Elementary School in Cavite.

The champion squad of Arnel Deo, Manuel Reyes and Alfin Pron swept their 11-game assignments in Maes-Maes, an indigenous Filipino sport similar to beach volleyball but played in a dried rice field.

Bicol Saro also pocketed the P15,000 cash prize in the event organized by the Imus Sports Council.

Runners-up Saint Francis, composed of Michael Manuel, Harold Pavia and Rigo Sequillos, took home P10,000 cash.

RMC 4-cocker lures champs

DERBY CHAMPIONS HEAD THE LIST OF more than 70 participants vying in the P500,000 "Noche Buena" 4-cock derby on Dec. 27 at Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque City.

The confirmed participants include the five champions in the recent 204-entry "Weder Weder Lang" 5-cock derby—Terry Santos, Allan Siaco, Moling Dorado-Mon Arcenas, Dr. Torres and Adiong Manari.

Host Rolly Ligon pegged the entry fee at P6,600 and minimum bet at P3,300.

Meanwhile, the RMC management has set the staging of RMC 18th Anniversary 6-Cock Derby on Jan. 15, 17, 22 and 24.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Wonders Miss (6), Tippietyler-too (3), Graceful (5), Life Is Delicious (2)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Miracle Music (7), Hide The Lightning (3), St. Emilion (6), Master Kenneth (1)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Friends For Never (3), Euromax (2), Prying Eyes (1), Getting Better (5)
Race 4—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—D As In Dixie (12), Iron Mic (7), Stream Time (10), Super Duper (4), Mister Cool (6), Wynn's Connection (7)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Security Queen (5), Royal Family (2), Honor Rose (3), Starlight Express (4)
Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Extreme Power (6), Yankee Clipper (2), Trouble Master (11), Queen Of Gaia (6), Deep Pockets (5)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Interceptor (9), King Aljhun (6), Gold Ruler (1), Given (7), Isla Clipper (2)
Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Majestic Queen (4), Summit Force/Coat Of Arms (11), Princess Leighla (6), Pabilic Express (1), Mainstay (10), Caden Dance (12)

Rip-off in Thailand?

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

I DO NOT MEAN TO APPEAR THE CYNIC here. If I am, I apologize.

But I don't buy the pitch of the Philippine Olympic Committee president, former Tarlac Rep. Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, and the 24th SEA Games chief of mission, Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, for supporting the action taken by amateur boxing association head Manny Lopez in pulling out our boxers from the men's finals in protest against biased officiating in the just-ended Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

The SEA Games Federation, where the Philippines is a member of good standing since 1977, has rules which must be followed and it has officials duly selected and authorized to enforce those rules.

Any country that joins the SEA Games does so with the clear-cut understanding that it shall abide by the rules. Decisions may not be pleasant to the athletes of a participating country, but that country may not be allowed to substitute its own rules to those organizing the games, in this case Thailand.

* * *

"The Filipino boxers should have been allowed to fight because that's the sporting thing to do," said Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez.

One can always file a protest if there are brazen violations of applications of the rules by officials.

Calling the pullout, "unsportsmanlike," other unhappy sectors said the Filipino boxers "should have fought first, then they can complain."

"Why do they complain about something that has not yet happened?"

Thailand boxing chief Gen. Taweep Jantararoj claimed there was nothing wrong with the judging and that the Filipino boxers were inferior to the Thais because the Philippines fielded its B-team.

"The Filipino boxers can't be expected to win," stressed Taweep. Unlike the Filipinos' second stringers, the Thais sent their very best in order to win as a fitting gift to their King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who is marking his 80th birthday.

"All the fights were judged fairly," said a referee from Jordan.

* * *

But a fuming Puentevella disagreed, citing the case of top woman boxer Mitchell Martinez as the most blatant botch of the Games. "Mitchell clearly clobbered her Thai opponent in the finals but lost the decision. Watch the video to see how she was cheated. What message are we sending to the kids? That cheating is okay?"

For his part, Cojuangco said: "Our boxers should not be sent to an arena where they would not get a fair chance. *Kawawa naman sila.*" He added that it's time we made a stand for the future of the SEA Games.

On the other hand, Lopez urged the Filipino people to rally behind their campaign to stop the rash of biased officiating in amateur boxing. He has high expectations about the new the leadership of AW (international amateur boxing association) president Dr. Wu Ching-kuo, which replaced the scandal-ridden administration of Prof. Anwar Chowdry, who served the Aiba for more than two decades.

NCA kickoff derby moved to Pasay

THE OPENING DERBY OF THE NATIONAL Cockers' Association (NCA) will be held today at the world-class Pasay City Cockpit, instead of the Rizal Multi-Purpose Building in Pasig City after the contractor failed to install air-conditioned units at the venue on time.

The NCA World Championship Derby, however, will push through on Jan. 8, 10, and 12 at the Rizal Multi-Purpose Building.

The country's finest gamefowl breeders will fight it out in today's derby with Beboy Uy, Rep. Iggy Arroyo, NCA chair Rudy Albano, Efren Canlas, Jun, Rudy Jingco, Jet Fernando, the Madlangbayan Brothers, JV Magsaysay, Nelson Salvanera and Manny Pacquiao heading the list of bidders.

The creme de la creme of local cockfighting will also vie in the derby. They include NCA stalwarts Patrick Antonio, Butch Pichay, Rey Briones, Benjie Lim, Julio Jalandoni, Bebot Villar, Ferdie Buensalida, Nonoy Libanan, Tony Marfori, Philip Menes, Ruel Ricafort, Edgar Santos, Jimmy Ang, Jun Santiago, Mario Villamor, Essie Malililin, Secretary Ronnie Puno, Dan Valero, Rene Medina, Ric de Guzman and Manny and Armand Santos.

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Coffee Kings, Road Kings take crack at s'final slots

GAMES TODAY (*The Arena, San Juan*)
2 p.m.—Toyota Balintawak vs Mail and More
4 p.m.—San Mig Coffee vs Pharex

TOP-FLIGHT PBL ACTION RESUMES today with San Mig Coffee and Toyota Balintawak seeking semifinal slots versus separate foes in the V-Go Extreme Energy Drink Cup at The Arena in San Juan.

Expecting to draw a huge boost from three new recruits, the Coffee Kings are favored over newcomer Pharex in their 4 p.m. match.

Yet the other 2 p.m. quarterfinal pairing may be a tossup, even with the Road Kings toting a twice-to-beat edge against the unpredictable Mail and More.

The Coffee Kings and the Road Kings only need to win once to advance to the semifinals versus unbeaten Hapee Toothpaste and three-time champion Harbour Centre.

Coach Koy Banal expects a fluid game from the Coffee Kings despite the late addition of San Beda stars Ogie Menor, Nigerian Sam Ekwe and Pong Escobal to his squad.

The trio already played for the multititled mentor in San Beda's 2006 NCAA championship run and in Magnolia's PBL campaign in the Silver Cup.

Ekwe, an intimidating 6-foot-8 behemoth, fills up the spot left by veteran Al Magpayo, who is still recuperating from a recent knee operation.

Menor and Escobal, meanwhile, are expected to provide more offensive firepower along with top team scorer Bonbon Custodio.

The Road Kings hope to sustain their momentum after thwarting the Comets, 77-68, in their winner-take-all match for the last quarterfinal bonus.

"Mail and More is a tough team and they match up pretty well against us," said coach Ariel Vanguardia, who will bank on Toyota standouts JV Casio, Cholo Villanueva and RJ Jazul.

Jasmine W. Payo

Top int'l stints for RP bets

Beijing-bound athletes to benefit from P30-M war chest

By Marc Anthony Reyes

TAÑAMOR: Boxing

MOLINA: Swimming

GO: Taekwondo

JAVIER: Archery

NEVER LOOK BACK. NEVER say die.

These are the exact words of Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez who yesterday urged athletes and officials alike to put the country's numbing Southeast Asian Games debacle behind.

Ramirez also announced the first batch of Olympic-bound athletes leaving for China next week.

With P30 million already set aside for the 16-plus athletes gearing for the 2008 Beijing Games, Ramirez said Filipino divers will fly to China on Dec. 22 to start training.

The rest of the Olympic team will get "premium foreign exposures," he added.

"The instruction from President Arroyo is very clear: Focus on the Olympics," said Ramirez, who is set to brief the President on the country's performance in the SEAG, where the Philippines placed an all-time low of sixth place in the overall standings.

Though Ramirez pointed to lack of money as a major factor in the debacle, he said: "All the other issues are just part of the game. If we host the SEA Games next year, we will again be the overall champion."

Athletes in track and field, aquatics, taekwondo, boxing, archery, fencing, lawn tennis and beach volleyball are expected to make up the Olympic team which, if the PSC plan pushes through, will undergo two to four months of training and three months of participation in top competitions.

"The athletes must be in Beijing one month or at least three weeks before the Olympics," said Ramirez.

The Summer Games begin on Aug. 8.

Ramirez also urged the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. to release the P9 million for the Thailand SEAG medalists before Christmas.

"There are many lessons to be learned from the SEA Games," he said. "Good things happen out of something bad."

Despite the disappointing form of the boxing team, which produced just one gold medalist out of 13 finalists, Ramirez said he still believes the first Olympic gold will come from the sport.

He said the Olympic-bound athletes' training is easy to finance.

"There are only 16 athletes, 20 at the most, and there are still eight months to go before the Olympics," said Ramirez. "Who knows what will happen."

So far only eight athletes are assured of Olympic slots. They are swimmers Miguel Molina, Daniel Coakley, JB Walsh and Ryan Arabejo, taekwondo jins Tshomlee Go and Mary Antoinette Rivero, archer Mark Javier and boxer Harry Tañamor.

Ateneo-La Salle duel: Tagaytay Midlands real test

THE DAUNTING TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS COURSE IN Tagaytay City has been spruced up to championship form in preparation for the La Salle-Ateneo Match Play 2007 which starts tomorrow.

Already very intimidating with its tight fairways and lashed by winds at this time of the year, the hazard-laden layout is expected to test the players.

Grass in greenside roughs have been grown higher than normal and the average green speed has been increased to measure about 10 stimpmeter.

"We have prepared a tough course for the competitors as they are really good players," said course superintendent Tim Walker.

La Salle is gunning for a third win in a row with skipper Freddie Mendoza leaning on the likes of Tommy Manotoc, Francis Gaston, Miko Alejandro, Justin Tambunting, Jenz Teczon and Southeast Asian Games silver medalist Anya Tanpinco.

But Ateneo, which won the inaugural staging of the Ryder Cup-style event at Sherwood in 2004, is out to even things up.

Team captain Teboy Javier is banking on reigning national amateur champion Anthony Fernando, Jeric Hechanova, Iggy Clavecilla, Junjun Plana, Marcel Puyat and Jingy Tuason.

The event actually starts today with the parade of teams at 5 p.m. followed by the traditional ceremonial tee-off at 5:30 p.m. and cocktails.

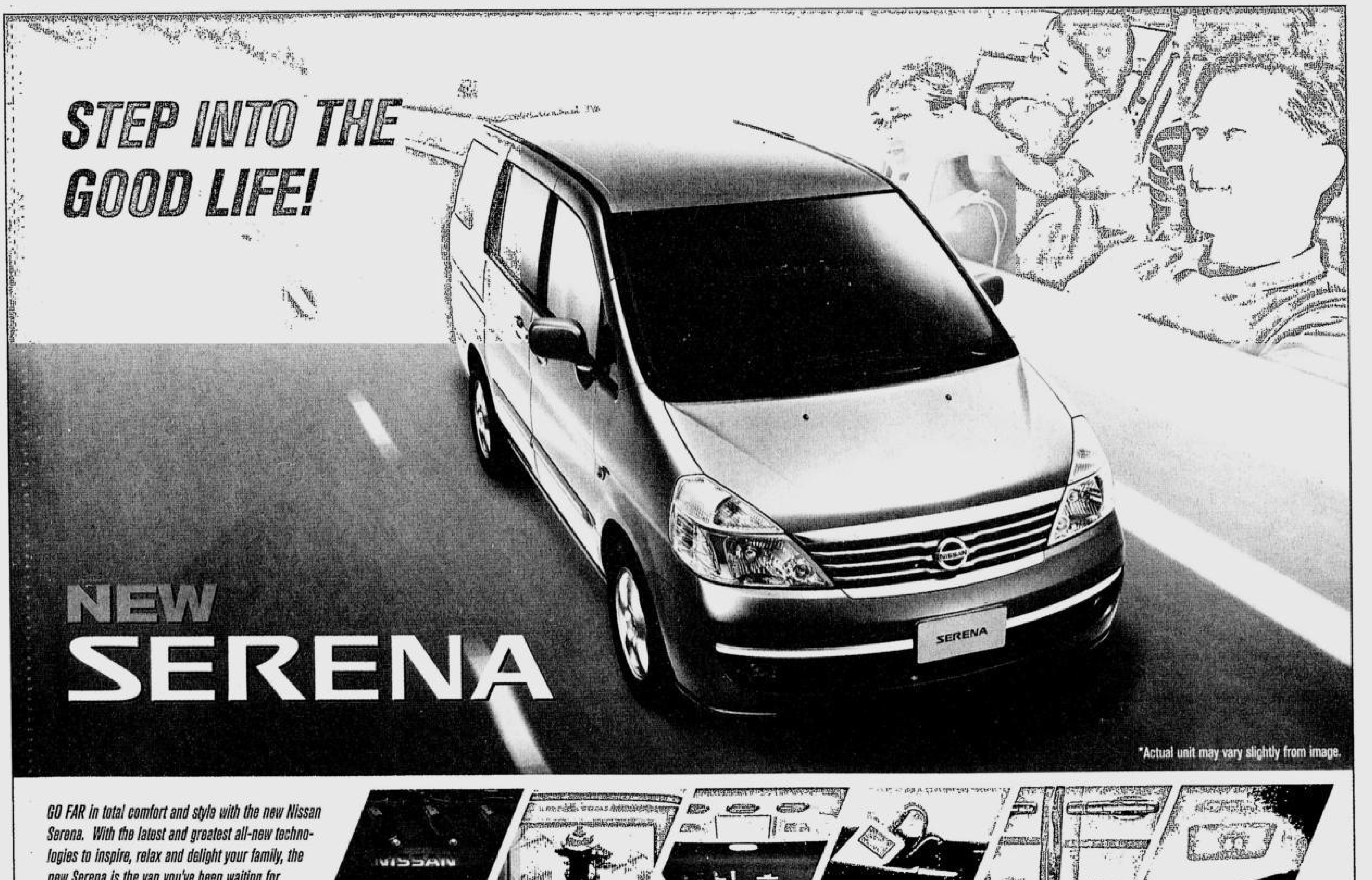
The tournament's first round fires off at 7 a.m. tomorrow with six foursome and as many four-ball matches.

Another set of six foursome matches and six four ball matches will be played on Thursday with the deciding 18 singles matches slated on Friday.

The event is organized and hosted by Belle Corp. and Tagaytay Highlands in cooperation with the De La Salle Alumni Association Golf Club and the Ateneo Golf Foundation. For inquiries, call Tagaytay Highlands at 0917-8865228.

The rest of the La Salle team: King Stehmeier, JP Reyes, Marco Olives, Justin Limjap, Miko Yee, Oliver Gan, Sammy Sy, Chucky Hong, Raffy Garcia, Chris Infante, Chepe Dulay, Ronnie Litua, Kim Hong, Yayi Escuadro, Bobby Celestino, Bones Floro, Migs Garcia, Augie Palisoc.

Rounding out the Ateneo team: Gab Atienza, Joel Bernaldez, Manoling Chan, Leana Farrales, Bayani Garcia, John Gobing, Katrina Gonzales, Lovelyn Guloguio, Marty Ilagan, Bobby Iñigo, Pepot Iñigo, Jovi Neri, Mikey Ozaeta, Don Padilla, Lino Refuerto, Mark Rivera, Benjie Sarmiento, Yoyong Velez.



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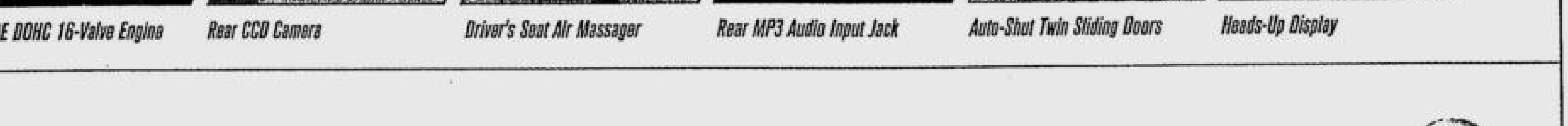

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SPORTS

Sweden rips swim world mark

DEBRECEN, HUNGARY—SWEDEN SET A WORLD RECORD OF 1 MINUTE, 24.19 seconds Sunday in the men's 4x50-meter freestyle relay event at the European Short Course Swimming Championships. Petter Stymne, Marcus Piehl, Per Nylin and Stefan Nystrand ripped Sweden's own world mark. *AP*

THE CELTICS' Kevin Garnett (right) blocks a shot by the Raptors' Rasho Nesterovic during their NBA game Dec. 16. REUTERS

Fiery Celtics make it 9

TORONTO—THE BOSTON CELTICS EASED TO A NINTH CONsecutive victory with a dominant 90-77 road win over the Toronto Raptors on Sunday.

Paul Pierce led the scoring with 18 points and Kevin Garnett added 16 as Boston improved their NBA-best record to 20-2 in bringing an end to the home team's four-game winning streak.

Four other Boston players reached double figures with Rajon Rondo scoring 14, Eddie House 11 and Tony Allen and James Posey 10 each.

Chris Bosh had 17 points and 13 rebounds as the Raptors experienced season lows for points, field goals and field-goal attempts against a tough Boston defense.

"It's our philosophy that defense is going to win games for us, and we're trying to have our defense fuel our offense," Garnett told reporters.

The Raptors made only 38.9 percent of their shots, slightly higher than their 36.7 percent effort against the same opponents last month.

"That's going to be our staple pretty much all year long," Pierce told reporters when asked about the Celtics' emphasis on defense.

"We take pride on the defensive end," he added. "Regardless of who's out there, that's going to be the make-up of our team.

"When teams think of the Boston Celtics, they're going to think of a defensive-minded group."

The Celtics opened the game with a 6-0 run on two Garnett jumpers and a Pierce layup.

The margin had stretched to 10 by the end of the first quarter and once Allen had given the Celtics a 40-19 lead with a three-pointer in the second quarter, the visitors were able to cruise all the way to the final buzzer.

"They are very long and athletic, and the plays we usually make just weren't there," Toronto's Bosh told reporters.

"They play good team defense. They clog up the lane and contest every shot."

The Portland Trail Blazers won their seventh straight game, topping the Denver Nuggets 116-105 behind Brandon Roy's 26 points and 11 assists. Channing Frye added 20 points as Portland snapped a nine-game losing streak in Denver. Allen Iverson had 38 points for the Nuggets.

The Detroit Pistons breezed to a 109-87 home win over the Golden State Warriors. Tayshaun Prince had 23 points and Chauncey Billups 19 for the Pistons. Antonio McDyess added 14 points and 11 rebounds. Reserve Matt Barnes led the Warriors with 15. *Reuters*

7-SHOT VICTORY

Tiger ends year with a bang

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORnia—Tiger Woods ended his 2007 campaign at the Target World Challenge on Sunday just as it began, with a victory.

He won the Buick Invitational in January in his first start and weathered a few hiccups at Sherwood Country Club in the final round before cruising home by seven shots.

It was the eighth title of the season for the world number one, who clinched his 13th major at the PGA Championship in August, and capped the best year of his life away from the golf course.

Woods became a father for the first time in June when his Swedish wife Elin gave birth to a daughter Sam Alexis and they were both waiting for him beside the 18th green as he signed off with a four-under-par 68.

"It puts things in perspective real quick," Woods told reporters after winning his fourth title at the elite 16-man event which he hosts.

"Even though I had won, I just want to know how she's doing, how she's been all day. I forgot for a moment 'Hey, you won a golf tournament'.

Woods's beloved father Earl died in May 2006 after a long battle with cancer. However, his shadow looms large over the Target World Challenge which he helped create to raise funds for Tiger Woods Foundation projects.

Woods junior, as has been his custom over the last nine years, donated his winner's cheque for $1.35 million to his foundation.

Woods was delighted to claim the title by a record seven-shot margin despite struggling with his swing over the last two rounds in his first tourney in two-and-a-half months. Reuters

WOODS with daughter Sam Alexis. REUTERS

Paragua, Gonzales hurdle Singapore Open foes

GRANDMASTER MARK PARAGUA and International Masters Jayson Gonzales and Oliver Dimakiling of the Philippines hurdled their opening matches in the 4th Singapore Masters International Open Tournament 2007 yesterday in Singapore.

Despite handling the black pieces, Paragua beat Russian Kiril Kuznetsov while Gonzales downed host bet Timothy Chan with white. Dimakiling, on the other hand, subdued Hong Kong's lone WGM Anya Korke.

Paragua meets China's Wan Yun Guo, winner over Singaporean Jarred Neubronner, in one of the marquee showdowns in the second round. Gonzales forged a clash with China's Shen Siyuan, who upset top seed GM Zhang Zhong, a former member of the Chinese national team who is now representing Singapore. Dimakiling will next face China's Lin Chen, who outplayed Singapore's Jonathan Koh.

Also with one point is Singapore-based IM Enrique Paciencia who routed local Fide Master Dominic Lo to arrange a meeting with No. 3 Indian GM Chanda Sandipan, conqueror of Vietnamese WGM Nguyen Thi Than An.

Another Singapore-based Filipino, IM Julio Catalino Sadorra drew with Singaporean Daniel Chan and will test the mettle of fellow 0.5-pointer Indonesian WIM Irine Kharisma Sukandar in the next round.

NM Rolando Andador was the lone Filipino casualty after bowing to GM Wu Shaobin of Singapore.

Other notable first round winners were Georgian GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili and Vietnamese GMs Nguyen Anh Dung and Dao Thien Hai.

Meanwhile, GM Susanto Megaranto of Indonesia was upset by Wang Li of China.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

Patriots drub Jets for 14th straight win

FOXBORO, MASSACHUSETTS—THE NEW England Patriots continued their historic charge Sunday by overcoming a winter blast of snow and wind to beat the New York Jets 20-10 and extend their season record to 14-0.

Eugene Wilson returned a first-quarter interception for a touchdown and recovered a key second half fumble as the Patriots became the first 14-0 team in the National Football League since the 1972 Miami Dolphins.

New England also clinched home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

"I'm sure it's going to be a factor throughout," Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said of securing home field.

New England won despite a season-worst performance by quarterback Tom Brady, who failed to throw a touchdown pass for the first time since December 10, 2006. Brady finished 14-of-27 for 140 yards and an interception.

Laurence Maroney picked up the slack offensively, rushing for a season-high 104 yards and a touchdown on 26 carries.

The weather overshadowed the first meeting between the two bitter rivals since Jets coach Eric Mangini claimed that Patriots coach Bill Belichick videotaped signals from the sideline during New England's 38-14 win three months ago. *AFP*

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Immune cell production increases in presence of the TESLAR Effect in laboratory experiment*

Dr. Glen Rein, while at Stanford Medical School, showed that in the presence of TESLAR there was, on average, 137% enhancement of human immune cell growth (in-vitro). A separate test demonstrated that nerve cells (in-vitro) could inhibit their uptake if noradrenalin (a depression-fighting process) by as much as 19.5% in the presence of TESLAR.

Children wearing TESLAR in a recent pilot study showed improved concentration*

In 2001, a 30-day study of 11 children with hyperactivity and attention problems was completed in Henderson, KY. Students were evaluated by teachers prior to beginning the study and again at the conclusion. Overall, per teachers' observations, students showed improvements in their ability to concentrate, play respectfully with other children, relate to adults, and respect authority, among other indicators.

The TESLAR Effect may "help compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone"*

In June 2002, Alternative Medicine Magazine conducted independent product testing which demonstrated that TESLAR may have a positive effect on the human body in the presence of a cell phone. This text measured Heart Rate Variability (HRV), which can be a good measurement of a body's overall response to external stress. This product test concluded that the use of TESLAR "may in fact compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone."

While wearing TESLAR, results suggest a "stabilizing effect" on or even "beneficial stimulation" of nervous system activity.

In 2003, Dr. Nyjon Eccles, MD, saw similar results on patients. Dr. Eccles' HRV tests showed that without TESLAR, the nervous system can become stressed when exposed to an energized cellphone. While wearing TESLAR, results suggest a "stabilizing effect" on or even "beneficial stimulation" of nervous system activity.

The TESLAR Effect may result in "improved cardiovascular fitness"*

In 2005, a Heart Rate Variability study (i.e. Stress Test) published in Explore! Magazine suggests TESLAR wearers may experience a more balanced Autonomic Nervous System related to cardiovascular fitness. Measurements suggest after wearing TESLAR, test subjects experienced improved general cardiovascular fitness related to (1) relaxing the "fight or flight" response; (2) increasing "relaxation response"; and (3) improving adaptability to external users.

* Philip Stein® TESLAR® is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any diseases. Results cannot be guaranteed as individual results vary

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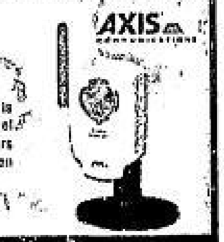
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Gov't cuts '08 export target to 8%

Expected slowdown in Japan, US takes its toll on RP goods

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT SLASHED ITS EXPORTS growth target for 2008, from 12 to 8 percent, due to the expected slowdown in demand from the United States and Japan—the Philippines' biggest export markets.

The interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), which sets the government's economic goals and forecasts, last Friday approved the revised exports growth target.

Although Filipino exporters have been successful in tapping more markets for its merchandise goods over the years, the United States and Japan continue to hold sway over the Philippines' export earnings due to their significant contributions, said the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Acting Neda Director General Augusto Santos said less-than-brisk exports for next year were considered in the setting of the 2008 economic growth target of between 6.3 and 7 percent, which is conservative compared with the projected growth of at least 7 percent this year.

"Weakened external demand, aggravated by the cooling US economy and the slow recovery of Japan, may pose downside risks," Santo said yesterday during the Neda's yearend economic briefing.

The slowdown in the US economy was partly brought on by the subprime market crisis in that country, where financial institutions were discouraged from lending to high-risk borrowers. The subprime market, where loan defaults are recorded, is composed of credit-risky borrowers of housing loans.

The United States and Japan each account for a double-digit contribution to the Philippines' export earnings. Latest data from the National Statistics Office showed that, of the country's $4.65-billion export earnings in October, the United States accounted for 17.7 percent, or $820.62 million. Japan accounted for close to 14 percent, at $649.65 million.

Santos also said exports growth would likely fall below the official target of 11 percent for this year.

GOV'T/B5

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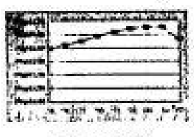
CURRENCIES

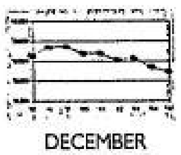


PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱41.655 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 17, 2006

STOCK MARKET



Shares close 1.5% lower

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY CLOSED down 1.5 percent amid regional weakness after Wall Street's Friday plunge. Dealers said technical glitches

SHARES/B3

IN THIS ISSUE
▨ **PNOC-EC** pushes back plan to list shares on PSE /B4
▨ **Reduced use** of structured loans eyed /B6

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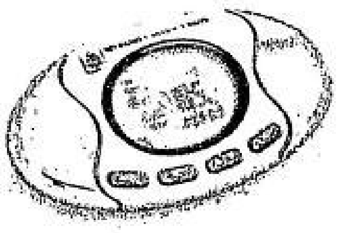

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RP firm files ₱100-M lawsuit vs Microsoft

By Daxim L. Lucas

US-BASED MICROSOFT CORP. and its local unit were slapped with a P100-million civil case yesterday by Southeastern College Inc. after the technology giant allegedly "pirated" a software manual written by the local educational establishment.

The case marks an unusual reversal of roles for Microsoft, which has aggressively pursued and prosecuted local business establishments found using illegally copied versions of its popular Windows operating systems and Microsoft Office applications.

"Microsoft, [which] vigorously goes after [copyright] infringers of its products, has violated the intellectual property right of one of our locals", said Atty. Estelito P. Mendoza who represents the complainant.

The damage suit stems from Microsoft's alleged unauthorized and illegal digital copying and distribution of a 379-page manual on the use of the "Microsoft Office" application.

Dubbed "Innovate: A Mentor's Guide to ICT Foundation Competencies," the manual's copyright is owned by Southeastern College and is lodged with the National Library with registration number A-2005-799 and assigned the ISBN (international standard numbering system) number 971-9272-1-2 by the National Library's bibliographic services division.

According to the complaint filed with the Makati Regional Trial Court, the manual was authored by Southeastern College school director Conrad M. Mañalac. It was developed in 1999 for the exclusive use of the school's teachers and students, as part of its information and communications technology (ICT) education program.

In 2004, Microsoft launched "Partners in Learning" (PIL), a global ICT education program meant to deliver technology skills training to students and teachers, and to assist in ICT integration into curricula and learning.

"Microsoft decided to use Southeastern College's Microsoft Office Manual to train its target participants in the use of Microsoft Office applications," the school said in a statement.

"Microsoft purchased printing licenses to print 10,000 copies of "The SEC Microsoft Office XP Manual" from Southeastern College," it added. "The 10,000 printed or book form copies, retitled "Innovate: A Mentor's Guide to ICT Founda-

RP FIRM/B5

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RP posts $67-M BOP deficit

Increased outflows due to foreign debt payments

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES POSTED A balance of payments deficit of $67 million in November, higher than the $17-million gap posted a year ago, due to outflows for foreign debt payments, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday.

For January to November, however, the BOP still registered a hefty surplus of $7.78 billion, more than double the $3.14 billion surplus in the same period last year.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the rare deficit for the month of November was largely due to foreign debt servicing, mainly covering maturing obligations.

It was only the second time this year that the country registered a monthly BOP deficit. The first was in September, when a BOP deficit of $95 million was registered.

But central bank data also showed that the increasing use of foreign currency swaps to lock up excess foreign inflows halted the BOP's climb to a new record high in November.

An all-time high BOP surplus was recorded in the first 10 months of the year at $7.85 billion. The country's rising external payment surplus this year was supported by the strong foreign exchange remittances from overseas Filipino workers and foreign investors.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world. Any transaction that gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident—importation or debt servicing—is a deficit item in the BOP. Deals that involve receipt of foreign currencies, including borrowings, exports or OFW remittances, are surplus items.

The November deficit also reflected the decline in the country's gross international reserves (GIR) to $32.46 billion from a record-high of $32.5 billion as of end-October.

The BSP had been buying US dollars heavily at the spot foreign exchange market to stem the peso's appreciation. However, to prevent the infusion of excess pesos into the financial system, some of these dollar purchases were locked up in foreign currency swap contracts instead of being transmitted to the GIR.

The GIR is an indicator of a country's ability to cover the foreign exchange requirements of its economy. It is composed of the central bank's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from multilateral institutions.

The strong inflows of OFW remittances in the fourth quarter prompted the BSP to intensify its use of currency swaps.

Three lucky groups

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

WHAT'S THIS WE HEAR THAT the Bureau of Customs, or the BOC, has new, shall we say, "partners" in the private sector for its brand-new system on importation?

Under its current boss, Commissioner Napoleon Morales, the BOC wants importers to lodge their shipment data with the BOC only through the Internet.

I heard, only a few weeks ago, that Morales issued a memorandum to "all concerned," in effect announcing the change.

Also contained in the Morales memo were the names of the three lucky groups with which the BOC would do the, er, "exclusive" business for the new system.

They are InterCommerce Network Services, eKonek Pilipinas and Cargo Data Exchange Center.

Under the Morales directive to "all concerned," all importers would have to pass through these three lucky groups to lodge their import data with the BOC. Each entry would cost them P45!

The Morales memo did not say what percentage of the fee would be the, ahh, "cut" of the three lucky groups.

* * *

AT THE same time, the BOC closed down another privately run import data-encoding center at the piers.

That was the Entry Encoding Center or EEC, manned by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which is perhaps the most influential business organization in the country.

The contract between the BOC and the PCCI was inked way back in 1996 by former BOC head Guillermo Parayno and former PCCI president Federico Pascual.

It, however expired in 2001 and the BOC simply extended the contract without any bidding. Thus, the case is now under investigation by the Office of the Ombudsman.

Moreover, during the Senate hearing on the 2008 budget of this cute administration, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile harped on the PCCI-BOC contract.

Word went around then that, apparently to appease JPE, Morales privately assured the senator that the BOC would soon terminate the contract.

Morales said the BOC already had the capability to perform the function of the EEC.

Indeed, the BOC divorced itself from PCCI and implemented a new import data entry system called the VASPs, or the value added service providers.

Those providers are again private companies. Wonderful!

* * *

PUBLICLY listed National Reinsurance Corp. of the Philippines, or PhilNaRe, recently won the "Insurance-Reinsurance Industry Contribution Award."

The whaaat?

Well, it is the "Oscars" of the insurance industry in Asia, given every two years, organized by two publications—Singapore-based Asia Insurance Review and London-based The Review Worldwide Reinsurance.

This year, the awards drew over 700 nominations from across the region. You know, it's that prestigious!

There were only 15 winners, which included three companies from China and India, and six multinationals.

And so only four winners came from Southeast Asia, which included the Philippines' PhilNaRe.

To think, PhilNaRe is the same company that, only some months ago, launched its IPO, raising about P2.8 billion in fresh capital.

PhilNaRe received a financial strength rating of "B++" (meaning, good) and an issuer credit rating of "bbb" (meaning, stable and investment grade) from the leading rating agency called A.M. Best (Asia-Pacific) Co.

In the first nine months of this year, PhilNaRe posted a net income of P 417.5 million, or 80 percent higher than the P 230.8 million it posted in the whole of last year.

After all, the company is the only reinsurance company in the country. I mean, really, it is virtually a monopoly.

* * *

BUT I have another item here about "awards," and it concerns Sen. Richard J. Gordon.

From what I hear, Gordon refused to accept recently the so-called gold humanitarian cross award from the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC).

It is actually the highest award that the PNRC can ever give to anybody who does good, and one of the previous recipients happened to be Gordon's mother, Amelia.

Gordon told the PNRC that he felt he was unworthy to receive the same recognition as his mother.

Amelia Gordon had received all three of the highest awards that the PNRC could give, namely, the Aurora Aragon award, the silver humanitarian cross award and the gold humanitarian cross award.

Had Dick accepted the award, it would have been the first time in PNRC history that mother and son had received all three coveted awards.

The PNRC award would have cited Dick Gordon as a "magnanimous and commendable servant leader" who gave more than 40 years of dedicated volunteer service— well, "par excellence"—to the PNRC.

It would have listed the numerous relief, rescue and rehabilitation operations that the senator organized and led—the Super Ferry fire, the Ultra stampede, the landslide in St. Bernard (Southern Leyte), the Glorietta 2 "explosion" and the Batasan bombing.

But this would have been my favorite part of the citation: "It is however with greater passion and commitment that he ran out

BREAKTIME/ B3

NOTICE TO MAYNILAD WATER CUSTOMERS AND THE PUBLIC

NEW WATER RATES FOR THE WEST ZONE

Effective 1 January 2008, Maynilad Water Services, Inc. will implement a tariff adjustment to cover the **2.6% Consumer Price Index** and Special Transitory Mechanism (STM), which is **8.99%** of the basic charge as recommended by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Regulatory Office No. 07-026-CA dated 12 December 2007 and confirmed by the MWSS Board Resolution No. **2007-274** dated 14 December 2007. Also included, is a downward adjustment in the Foreign Currency Differential Adjustment (FCDA), which is **-1.85%** of the basic charge. This percentage may increase or decrease quarterly depending on the fluctuation of the foreign exchange rates.

This supercedes the STM rate specified in the December 17, 2007 notice.

The **MWSI** presently serves the West Zone which consists of the following areas: The cities of **Manila** (all but portions of San Andres & Sta. Ana), Quezon City (west of San Juan River, West Ave., EDSA, Congressional & Mindanao Ave..; the northern part starting from Districts of the Holy Spirit & Batasan Hills), **Makati**,(west of South Super Hi-way), **Caloocan, Pasay, Paranaque, Las Pinas, and Valenzuela**, and the towns of **Navotas and Malabon** - all in **Metro Manila**; **Cavite City**, towns of Bacoor, Imus, Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario - all in **Cavite** province.

The new schedule of water tariff for all MWSI customers effective January 1, 2008 is as follows:

1. WATER CHARGES	Effective Until Dec. 31, 2007	Effective on Jan. 1, 2008		Effective Until Dec. 31, 2007	Effective on Jan. 1, 2008
A. BASIC CHARGE					
RESIDENTIAL			**SEMI-BUSINESS**		
First 10 cu.m.	₱ 75.65 /conn.	₱ 77.62 /conn.	First 10 cu.m.	₱ 127.08 /conn.	₱ 130.38 /conn.
Next 10 cu.m.	9.24 /cu.m.	9.48 /cu.m.	Next 10 cu.m.	15.51 /cu.m.	15.91 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	17.56 /cu.m.	18.02 /cu.m.	Next 20 cu.m.	19.11 /cu.m.	19.61 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	23.07 /cu.m.	23.67 /cu.m.	Next 20 cu.m.	24.23 /cu.m.	24.86 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	26.95 /cu.m.	27.65 /cu.m.	Next 20 cu.m.	28.17 /cu.m.	28.90 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	28.17 /cu.m.	28.90 /cu.m.	Next 20 cu.m.	29.49 /cu.m.	30.26 /cu.m.
Next 50 cu.m.	29.46 /cu.m.	30.23 /cu.m.	Next 50 cu.m.	30.78 /cu.m.	31.58 /cu.m.
Next 50 cu.m.	30.78 /cu.m.	31.58 /cu.m.	Next 50 cu.m.	32.08 /cu.m.	32.91 /cu.m.
Over 200 cu.m.	32.08 /cu.m.	32.91 /cu.m.	Over 200 cu.m.	33.35 /cu.m.	34.22 /cu.m.
BUSINESS GROUP I			**BUSINESS GROUP II**		
First 10 cu.m.	₱ 343.82 /conn.	₱ 352.76 /conn.	₱ First 10 cu.m.	₱ 372.04 /conn.	₱ 381.71 /conn.
Next 90 cu.m.	34.54 /cu.m.	35.44 /cu.m.	Next 90 cu.m.	37.44 /cu.m.	38.41 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.64 /cu.m.	35.54 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	37.68 /cu.m.	38.66 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.74 /cu.m.	35.64 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	37.96 /cu.m.	38.95 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.86 /cu.m.	35.77 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	38.23 /cu.m.	39.22 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.97 /cu.m.	35.88 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	38.48 /cu.m.	39.48 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	35.15 /cu.m.	36.06 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	38.74 /cu.m.	39.75 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	35.29 /cu.m.	36.21 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	39.00 /cu.m.	40.01 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	35.40 /cu.m.	36.32 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	39.23 /cu.m.	40.25 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	35.53 /cu.m.	36.45 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	39.51 /cu.m.	40.54 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	35.62 /cu.m.	36.55 /cu.m.	Next 100 cu.m.	39.75 /cu.m.	40.78 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	35.80 /cu.m.	36.73 /cu.m.	Next 200 cu.m.	40.01 /cu.m.	41.05 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	35.91 /cu.m.	36.84 /cu.m.	Next 200 cu.m.	40.25 /cu.m.	41.30 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	36.07 /cu.m.	37.01 /cu.m.	Next 200 cu.m.	40.55 /cu.m.	41.60 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	36.18 /cu.m.	37.12 /cu.m.	Next 200 cu.m.	40.76 /cu.m.	41.82 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	36.28 /cu.m.	37.22 /cu.m.	Next 200 cu.m.	41.04 /cu.m.	42.11 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.38 /cu.m.	37.33 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	41.30 /cu.m.	42.37 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.58 /cu.m.	37.53 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	41.53 /cu.m.	42.61 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.70 /cu.m.	37.65 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	41.78 /cu.m.	42.87 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.83 /cu.m.	37.79 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	42.08 /cu.m.	43.17 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.89 /cu.m.	37.85 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	42.30 /cu.m.	43.40 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.05 /cu.m.	38.01 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	42.59 /cu.m.	43.70 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.21 /cu.m.	38.18 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	42.83 /cu.m.	43.94 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.30 /cu.m.	38.27 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	43.06 /cu.m.	44.18 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.44 /cu.m.	38.41 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	43.34 /cu.m.	44.47 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.58 /cu.m.	38.56 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	43.62 /cu.m.	44.75 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.68 /cu.m.	38.66 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	43.84 /cu.m.	44.98 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.83 /cu.m.	38.81 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	44.15 /cu.m.	45.30 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.96 /cu.m.	38.95 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	44.36 /cu.m.	45.51 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.09 /cu.m.	39.08 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	44.65 /cu.m.	45.81 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.23 /cu.m.	39.22 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	44.88 /cu.m.	46.05 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.34 /cu.m.	39.34 /cu.m.	Next 500 cu.m.	45.16 /cu.m.	46.33 /cu.m.
Over 10000 cu.m.	38.48 /cu.m.	39.48 /cu.m.	Over 10000 cu.m.	45.39 /cu.m.	46.57 /cu.m.

B. CERA - P1.00 per m3 of water consumption

C. **Foreign Currency Differential Adjustment (FCDA)** - a percentage of the basic charge subject to quarterly review and adjustment

D. **Special Transitory Mechanism (STM)**→8.99 % of the basic charge based on the court-approved 2005 Revised Rehabilitation Plan dated 20 April 2005 and the DCRA.

2. A. ENVIRONMENTAL CHARGE (EC)→10% of Water Charge B. SEWERAGE CHARGE (SC) - 50% of Water Charge For all customers connected to MWSI sewerlines

3. MAINTENANCE SERVICE CHARGE (MSC)

METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)
1/2" or 13mm	₱ 1.50	1 1/4" or 40mm	4.00	4" or 50mm	20.00
3/4" or 20mm	2.00	2" or 50mm	6.00	6" or 150mm	35.00
1" or 25mm	3.00	3" or 75mm	10.00	8" or 200mm	50.00

4. VALUE-ADDED TAX (VAT) 12% of the Charges 1, 2 and 3

THE MONTHLY BILL IS THE SUM OF 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Approved by:

ALBERTO C. AGRA
OIC, MWSS-Regulatory Office

LORENZO H. JAMORA
Administrator, MWSS

ROGELIO L. SINGSON
President, MWSI

MAYNILAD WATER **MWSS**

NEW ALL -IN TARIFF EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2008

The Maynilad Water all-in average tariff effective January 1, 2008 was reduced from Php 32.96 per cubic meter to Php 31.66 or net decrease of Php 1.30 per cubic meter.

NOTICE TO SEA TRANSPORT CUSTOMERS

The Sea Transport Rate (STR) adjustment has been approved by the MWSS BOT under Resolution No. 2007-275 dated December 14, 2007 under a two-tiered scheme as follows:

	Effectivity Dates	
	January 1, 2008	July 1, 2008
STR per cubic meter (all-in)	Php 42.59	Php 78.03

The FCDA component in the all-in tariff shall be subject to quarterly review and adjustment.

The subsequent adjustments of the STR shall be based on the Rate Adjustment Limit (RAL) of the Standard Rates including foreign exchange adjustments per Amendment No.1 of the Concession Agreement.

The STR applies to water sold directly to ships and other sea transports.

Breaktime

From page B2

of his vehicle during a downpour to rescue a Red Cross staff whose vehicle skidded off the road on a trip from Quezon province."

The citation would have also referred to the election of Gordon to the governing board of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

It was a first for a Filipino.

Shares ...

From page B1

halted trading twice and exacerbated the sell-off, while bullish government economic growth projections failed to lift sentiment.

The composite index lost 51.87 points to 3,486.82. The broader all-share index was down 29.97 points or 1.4 percent at 2,146.44.

Decliners outnumbered gainers 100 to 26, while 34 stocks were unchanged.

Turnover was 1.2 billion shares worth P2.5 billion ($60.7 million).

"It's the spectre of a US recession that kept investors out of the market," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities. *AFP*

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500,000 - 999,999	3.75	3.75
1.0MM - 4.99MM	4.50	4.50
5.0MM - 9.99MM	4.75	4.75
10.0MM and up	5.00	5.00

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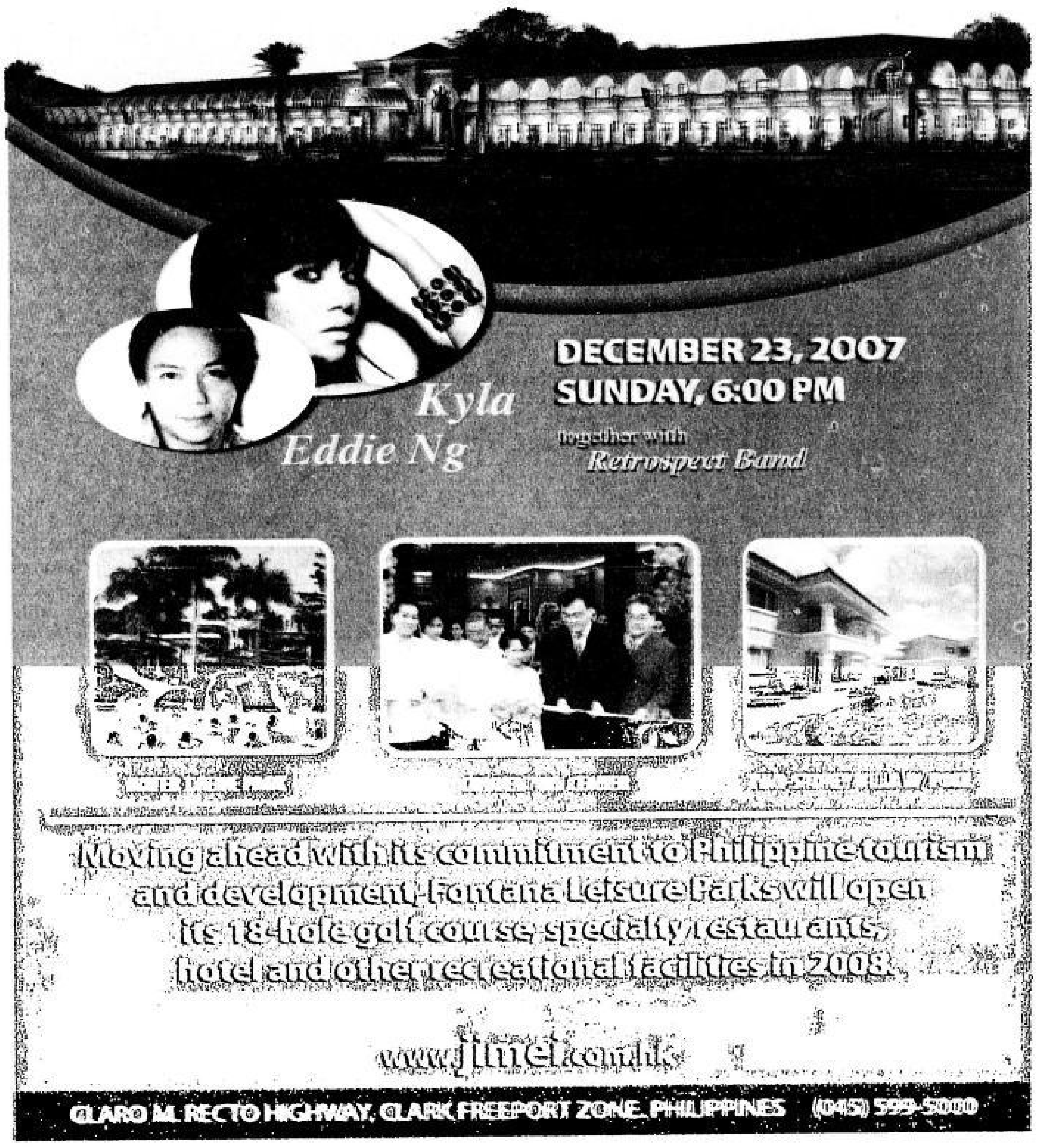

FONTANA

Soft Opening of the
New Clubhouse
Fontana Leisure Parks

克拉克渡假城聖誕[illegible]會
全新豪華會所娛樂場試業

Kyla
Eddie Ng

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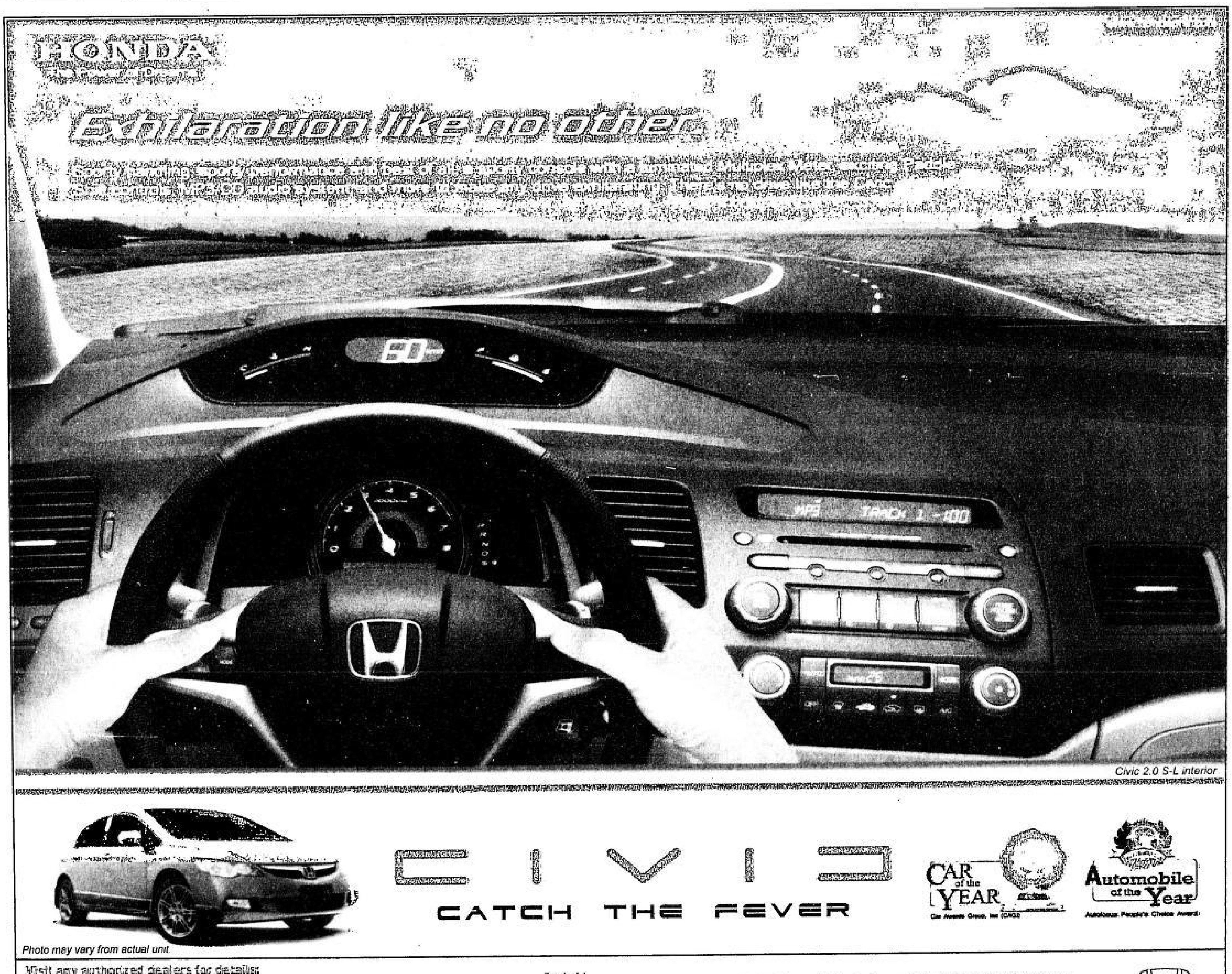

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HONDA

PNOC-EC pushes back plan to list shares on PSE

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PRIVATIZATION OF PNOC EXploration Corp. may not take place until the second quarter next year as Philippine National Oil Co. plans to first bid out the contract for the development of the Malampaya oil leg before going through with the privatization process.

PNOC-EC had originally planned to conduct an initial public offering within the first quarter of next year.

PNOC president Antonio Cailao said the development of the oil aspect of the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power Project would likely boost the value of PNOC-EC, allowing it to get more from the sale of part of its shares.

"The oil leg development can boost the price of PNOC-EC if it is bid out. There's really no need to rush the privatization (of PNOC-EC). We hope we can bid out the oil leg development before we go through with the PNOC-EC privatization plan," he said yesterday.

He revealed, however, that the terms of reference for the bidding of the Malampaya oil leg development contract had yet to be finalized.

In an earlier interview, PNOC-EC president Rafael Del Pilar said it would take close to $1 billion to develop the Camago-Malampaya Oil Leg, which lies beneath the gas reserves of the Malampaya project off Palawan.

Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes earlier said the government was leaning toward bidding out the project to interested third parties instead of having PNOC-EC, a Malampaya consortium member itself, or the private-sector members of the Malampaya group undertake the project.

The Malampaya consortium is composed of PNOC-EC with a 10-percent stake and multinationals Shell Philippines Exploration BV and Chevron Malampaya LLC, each with a 45-percent stake.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves had said the sale of the government's 60-percent stake in PNOC-EC would generate at least P6 billion for the government.

All markets in disarray

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

JANE AND ARLENE ARE OUTSIDE their nursing home, having a drink and a smoke, when it starts to rain. Jane pulls out a condom, cuts off the end, puts it over her cigarette, and continues smoking.

Arlene: What in the hell is that?

Jane: A condom. This way my cigarette doesn't get wet.

Arlene: Where did you get it?

Jane: You can get them at any drugstore.

The next day, Arlene hobbles herself into the local drugstore and announces to the pharmacist that she wants a box of condoms.

The pharmacist, obviously embarrassed, looks at her kind of strangely (she is after all, over 80 years of age), but very delicately asks what brand of condom she prefers.

"Doesn't matter Sonny, as long as it fits on a Camel." The pharmacist fainted.

* * *

I HAVE been in the stock market since 1951 and I cannot ever remember a more chaotic period through which we are passing. Markets are extremely volatile and the DOW goes up or down 200 to 300 points a day; 1000-point moves in Hong Kong are normal and nobody has any idea which way the market will move in the short term. The subprime mortgage crisis has now surfaced in Norway, far closer to the North Pole than the United States. All we know is that the mortgage crisis is now worldwide and banks and brokers have not finished writing off their huge losses, currently $76 billion.

As a result, the Wall Street had its biggest decline in a month even though the FED cut 25 basis points as expected. Many were hoping for 50 basis points, but of the 12 FED members, only 7 voted for a 25-point cut. It is believed that one person wanted a larger cut while four wanted interest rates to remain unchanged. The reason for the dilemma stems from all the confusing data. Even the intervention of five central banks pumping liquidity into the system has failed to stem the decline.

On the one hand, we can see the United States, Europe and Japan all slowing down and this must adversely affect Asian exports with Japan, Korea and Taiwan probably the biggest losers. This casts doubt over the pace of Asia's growth and FITCH RATING expects the region to slow from 8.7 percent to 7.7 percent with inflation rising from 4.3 percent to 4.8 percent. This is far above the developed countries' economies, thanks to China (11.4 percent) and India (9 percent).

The United States is only expected to grow by 1.7 percent next year, Europe by 2 percent and Japan down to 0.9 percent. So despite everything, Asia is still the place to invest in for long-term growth.

Returning to the United States, the Producer Price Index rose 3.2 percent, the biggest jump in 34 years. This means that companies must either pass this on to the consumer, which will accelerate inflation, already above the FED's comfort level, or they can try to absorb this, in which case earnings next year are going to suffer.

The surging price of oil is the main culprit and nobody knows whether it will be $80 or $100 when winter gets under way any time now. The Consumer Price Index, the best indicator of inflation, rose from 0.3 percent in October to 0.8 percent in November, well above economists' forecasts so inflation is a major concern and makes cutting rates further a dangerous exercise.

Against this, house prices continue to slide and although house sales rose 1.2 percent surprisingly, the number of defaults next year is expected to rise at an alarming pace.

Alan Greenspan says the odds of the United States going into recession are "clearly rising" and he believes that economic growth is about to stall. He is not offering BERNANKE any advice and denies that he held interest rates down for too long, allowing the housing boom to turn into a bubble.

Greenspan says that in order to prevent the housing boom, he would have had to raise interest rates so high that it would have broken the back of the economy. I would not be surprised if BERNANKE left interest rates unchanged next month but there will be tremendous pressure on him to continue cutting to stave off a recession.

China has raised its reserve requirement nine times this year to 14.5 percent, thereby draining liquidity from the banks. It will probably also increase the lending rate for the 6th time this year and allow the yuan to appreciate a little faster as the trade surplus is becoming an embarrassment and may result in retaliation. China's reserves are $1.5 trillion, enough to buy entire countries. Inflation has risen to 6.5 percent, more than twice the central bank's target of 3 percent, and retail sales have risen from 18.1 percent to 18.8 percent. Minimum wages rose 13.2 percent in the first nine months and China might be losing its edge to other Asian countries. GDP is expected to slow from 11.4 percent to 10.7 percent on the back of lower exports.

Japan, the world's second-largest economy, is back in the doldrums, wages and sales are static, company profits depend largely on the value of the yen and growth is expected to fall to 0.9 percent in 2008.

South Korea and the Philippines seem to be the main targets of foreign selling. For one month, foreign net selling averaged P500 million a day; last week it accelerated to P1 billion as institutions dumped a wide range of blue chips, especially properties, retailers and utilities.

Our market, trading about P4.5 billion or P3 billion net of cross sales, simply cannot cope with sales of this magnitude. Last Friday was a terrible day with the PHISIX plunging 87 points and closing at its low. Today is more of the same and the DOW futures are down again.

There is no obvious reason for the selling as the economy grew at about 7 percent this year and will probably grow at about 6.4 percent next year. Government sales of state-owned assets have proceeded according to plan and further assets will be sold next year. But there are some concerns.

The BIR missed its target by a sizable amount and we are running a large trade deficit papered over by record remittances from OFWs, whose families are getting less bang for the buck.

I made a big SPLASH with the mention of the company looking cheap at P7. Since then, it has risen as high as P8.20 but has come back with the market. SPLASH is now supplying THERAHERB to BRAZIL in partnership with FEGNELLI, which has access to 400 health food stores, drugstores and supermarkets. Brazil ranks 8th in the top countries for supplements.

My crush, Jessica ALBA, became pregnant by another man so I have sent her to the recycle bin.

mrbearbull@hotmail.com

San Miguel sells Enterprise stake

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

SAN MIGUEL PROPERTIES INC. (SMPI), THE property arm of conglomerate San Miguel Corp., has sold for P1.8 billion its 29.4-percent stake in a company that owns and operates the Enterprise Center in Makati City.

SMPI corporate information officer Ferdinand Constantino said in a disclosure yesterday to the Philippine Stock Exchange that the company had signed a share purchase agreement with Shang Properties Inc., formerly Edsa Properties Holdings Inc., wherein SMPI would sell its entire 354,862 shares in KSA Realty Corp., owner and operator of Enterprise, to Shang Properties.

Shang Properties told the PSE that the deal was expected to be completed in early 2008.

SMPI president Jeronimo Kilayko told the INQUIRER that the company has not yet decided on what to do with the proceeds from the sale.

CURRENCIES

December 17, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.693097	1.000000	41.1910
Japan	Yen	0.006118	0.008827	0.3636
United Kingdom	Pound	1.398392	2.017600	83.1070
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.088869	0.128220	5.2815
Switzerland	Franc	0.601072	0.867227	35.7219
Canada	Dollar	0.681846	0.983768	40.5224
Singapore	Dollar	0.477635	0.689132	28.3860
Australia	Dollar	0.598995	0.864230	35.5985
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.849441	2.668374	109.9130
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.185315	0.267373	11.0134
Brunei	Dollar	0.475995	0.686766	28.2886
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000074	0.000107	0.0044
Thailand	Baht	0.023065	0.033278	1.3708
UAE	Dirham	0.188752	0.272331	11.2176
EU	Euro	1.000000	1.442800	59.4304
Korea	Won	0.000746	0.001076	0.0443
China	Yuan**	0.094024	0.135658	5.5879
Denmark	Kroner	0.134043	0.193397	7.9662
India	Rupee	0.017636	0.025445	1.0481
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.208953	0.301477	12.4181
New Zealand	Dollar	0.532783	0.768699	31.6635
Sweden	Kroner	0.106444	0.153577	6.3260
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.021418	0.030902	1.2729

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY time—Dec. 14, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.
** Asian time closing rate as of Dec. 14, 2007

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 17, 2007)

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
		BANKS					
17.5	6.8	Asiatrust Development Bank Inc	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	21,000
73	44	Banco de Oro-EPCI Inc.	59.5	59.5	58	58	303,300
73.5	53	Bank of the Philippine Islands	61	61	60	60	1,781,400
748	544	China Banking Corp.	655	655	655	655	3,110
23.5	14	Citystate Savings Bank	23	23	23	23	100,000
0.63	0.36	Export and Industry Bank Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.38	1,950,000
75.5	47.5	Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company	55	56	53	53.5	1,130,700
65.5	39	Philippine National Bank	48.5	49	48.5	49	47,000
68	47	Philippine Savings Bank	59.5	60	59.5	59.5	1,500
58	50	Philippine Trust Company	58	58	58	58	1,000
39.57	20.43	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	24.25	24.5	23.75	24	1,098,900
90	65	Security Bank Corp.	75.5	76	75.5	76	104,300
66	42	Union Bank of the Philippines	44.5	44.5	44	44	54,100
		OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
2.22	0.6	Bankard Inc.	1.88	1.9	1.88	1.88	716,000
16.25	4.6	CitisecOnline.com Inc.	10.75	11.25	10.5	11	196,600
5.9	4.65	I-Remit Inc.	4.75	4.75	4.65	4.7	270,000
5.7	1.74	Makati Finance Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	54,000
1,970.00	1,580.00	Manulife Financial Corp.	1,600.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	100
5	2.7	National Reinsurance Corp. of the Phils.	3.15	3.25	3.1	3.2	1,607,000
3.1	1.32	PCI Leasing and Finance Inc.	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	24,000
1,390.00	270	The Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.	1,025.00	1,025.00	1,020.00	1,020.00	5,690
2,500.00	1,970.00	Sun Life Financial Inc.	2,150.00	2,150.00	2,150.00	2,150.00	80
1.94	1.3	Vantage Corp.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.62	480,000
		ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
6.2	3.8	Aboitiz Power Corp.	5.1	5.2	5	5	747,000
70.5	49	First Gen Corp.	60	60.5	59.5	60.5	64,700
92	58	First Phil. Holdings Corp.	69.5	71	69.5	71	196,700
18.5	8.8	Manila Water Company Inc.	17.25	18.25	17	18.25	4,732,900
105.45	48.18	Manila Electric Company	80	80	77	78.5	663,700
7.8	4.3	PNOC Energy Development Corp.	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	5,030,000
7.4	3.95	Petron Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	2,113,000
14.75	6.4	Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc.	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.9	25,000
2.04	0.94	Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Dev't Corp.	1.26	1.3	1.26	1.28	2,827,000
		FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
6.3	3.4	Alaska Milk Corp.	4.85	4.9	4.85	4.9	177,000
2.32	1.48	Alliance Tuna International Inc.	1.58	1.58	1.5	1.56	252,000
2.2	1.08	CADP Group Corp.	1.62	1.68	1.62	1.68	30,000
28.5	20	Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23	23	23	23	447,100
61	40.5	Jollibee Foods Corp.	47	48	47	48	462,200
9.1	6	Pancake House Inc.	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	5,000
0.98	0.5	RFM Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	50,000
3.1	2.06	Roxas Holdings	2.85	2.9	2.85	2.9	624,000
80	42.5	San Miguel Corp. A	59	60	59	60	188,900
88	43	San Miguel Corp. B	60	60.5	59	60	2,895,000
0.68	0.33	Swift Foods Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	50,000
20.75	13.5	Universal Robina Corp.	14	14	14	14	638,700
0.55	0.24	Vitarich Corp.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	60,000
		CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
40	7.3	Concrete Aggregates Corp. A	35	36	35	36	2,000
6.1	2.65	EEI Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	51,000
9.2	4.95	Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	468,000
2	0.81	Southeast Asia Cement Holdings Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.98	540,000
23	7.12	TKC Steel Corp.	8.8	9.1	8.8	9	759,000
		CHEMICALS					
6.3	3.75	Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.1	4.15	4.1	4.1	96,000
		DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
4	2.5	Active Alliance Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	5,000
0.76	0.185	Picop Resources Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.34	0.35	1,200,000
9	6.2	Splash Corp.	8	8.2	7.7	7.9	2,367,000
		HOLDING FIRMS					
39	18.75	ABS-CBN Hldg Corp. - Phil. Deposit Receipts	34	34.5	34	34.5	726,400
3.9	2.7	A. Soriano Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	60,000
0.185	0.0575	AJO.net Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.115	0.115	66,010,000
1.28	0.3	APC Group Inc.	0.58	0.6	0.58	0.58	520,000
3.65	1.5	ATN Holdings Inc. A	2.4	2.44	2.4	2.44	99,000
0.018	0.0075	Abacus Cons. Res. and Hold'gs Inc. A	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	3,000,000
0.019	0.008	Abacus Cons. Res. and Hold'gs Inc. B	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	31,000,000
9.7	5.8	Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc.	7	7	6.9	6.9	4,865,000
7.3	3.5	Alliance Global Group Inc.	5.1	5.2	5.1	5.1	6,358,000
2.9	1.04	Anglo-Philippine Holdings Corp.	2.32	2.32	2.3	2.32	1,491,000
8	0.8	Aries Prime Resources Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	1,000
645	400	Ayala Corp.	530	530	515	515	224,130
5.8	2.14	Benpres Holdings Corp.	4	4	3.9	4	4,093,000
12	5.8	DMCI Holdings Inc.	9.3	9.4	9.3	9.3	115,000
8	3.5	Filinvest Development Corp.	6.1	6.1	5.9	5.9	135,000
3.55	1.76	House of Investments Inc.	2	2	2	2	73,000
14.5	8.9	JG Summit Holdings Inc.	10	10	9.8	9.8	473,000
28	1.42	Lodestar Investment Hldgs Corp.	16.75	18	16.75	18	200
11.5	1.5	Minerales Industrias Corp.	6.5	6.7	6.2	6.2	2,117,000
8.5	3	PAL Holdings Inc.	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	26,000
0.28	0.016	Pacifica Inc. A	0.22	0.225	0.21	0.22	59,080,000
1.54	0.62	Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	20,000
0.75	0.19	Prime Orion Philippines Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	260,000
452.5	285.32	SM Investments Corp.	342.5	342.5	337.5	340	425,400
0.75	0.12	Wellex Industries Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	660,000
		PROPERTY					
2.38	1	A Brown Company Inc.	1.94	1.94	1.78	1.8	5,329,000
8.9	5	Anchor Land Holdings Inc.	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.3	24,000
19.25	12.08	Ayala Land Inc.	14.5	14.5	14	14.25	15,709,400
1.88	1	Belle Corp.	1.16	1.2	1.16	1.2	615,000
2.04	1.56	Cebu Property Venture and Dev't Corp.A	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	106,000
2.06	1.7	Cebu Property Venture and Dev't Corp.B	1.84	1.84	1.82	1.82	136,000
0.83	0.24	Cyber Bay Corp.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	980,000
1.05	0.56	Empire East Land Holdings Inc.	0.81	0.82	0.75	0.81	8,710,000
6.9	1.1	Eton Properties Philippines Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	40,000
0.47	0.0675	Ever Gotesco Res. and Hold'gs Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.225	980,000
1.48	0.61	Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.95	100,000
2.44	1.3	Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.4	1.3	1.3	91,459,000
2.9	1.28	Keppel Philippines Properties Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	10,000
1.12	0.31	MRC Allied Industries Inc.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.55	1,940,000
4.6	2.24	Megaworld Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.65	3.75	39,840,000
6.4	1.5	Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	27,000
0.86	0.32	Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.48	0.46	0.46	3,970,000
23	14.5	Robinson Land Corp.	15.5	15.5	15.25	15.25	2,788,000
5.9	2.05	SM Development Corp.	3.85	3.85	3.75	3.75	47,000
13.5	7.92	SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10	10.5	10	10.25	7,474,000
3.25	1.5	Shang Properties Inc.	2.14	2.14	2.14	2.14	74,000
4.5	0.38	Sta. Lucia Land Inc.	1.82	1.82	1.72	1.78	181,000
1.34	0.46	Suntrust Home Developers Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	510,000
0.49	0.0975	Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.22	0.22	2,000,000
7.5	3.65	Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	5.7	5.9	5.6	5.9	5,765,000
		MEDIA					
38.5	18.75	ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	33	33.5	33	33.5	130,000
12	7.8	GMA Holdings Inc.	8.2	8.2	8.1	8.1	1,619,000
11.75	7.5	GMA Network Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.7	569,000
1.03	0.81	Manila Bulletin Publishing Corp.	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86	20,000
		TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
2.12	1.1	Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc.	1.44	1.54	1.42	1.52	16,741,000
1,750.00	1,180.00	Globe Telecom Inc.	1,480.00	1,480.00	1,455.00	1,460.00	20,020
3,285.00	2,250.00	Phil. Long Distance Telephone Co.	2,990.00	2,990.00	2,975.00	2,980.00	112,140
8.1	5.5	Pilipino Telephone Corp.	6.9	7	6.9	6.9	2,534,000
		INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
15.75	2.1	Diversified Financial Network Inc.	14.25	15.5	14	15	3,481,900
11.5	3.55	IPVG Corp.	7.5	7.7	7.2	7.5	727,000
0.065	0.027	ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.037	29,200,000
5	1.62	Information Capital Tech. Ventures Inc.	2.9	3.15	2.9	3.15	126,000
2.9	1.1	Ionics Inc.	1.54	1.56	1.54	1.54	380,000
0.32	0.05	Island Information and Technology Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	810,000
2.26	1.1	Music Semiconductors Corp.	2.12	2.12	1.98	2	2,723,000
0.0725	0.03	Philweb Corp.	0.046	0.047	0.045	0.046	30,000,000
5.1	1.64	Transpacific Broadband Group Int'l. Inc.	2.4	2.42	2.38	2.4	552,000
		TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
2.14	1.2	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.2	1.22	487,000
6.8	3.6	Asian Terminals Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	5,532,000
49	19	Int'l Container Terminal Services Inc.	43.5	44	43.5	44	174,500
2.16	0.93	Keppel Philippines Marine Inc.	2	2.1	2	2.1	1,062,000
2.7	1.12	Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.3	1.3	19,000
		HOTEL & LEISURE					
16.5	5	Acesite (Phils.) Hotel Corp.	9	15	9	15	230,000
1.52	0.33	Premiere Entertainment Productions Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.18	1.26	5,818,000
1.2	0.55	Waterfront Philippines Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.75	0.75	200,000
		EDUCATION					
9.4	7.2	Centro Escolar University	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	5,000
3.7	2.6	IPeople Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	55,000
		DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
43	6.6	JTH Davies Holdings Inc.	29.5	29.5	29	29	3,900
6	2.04	Macroasia Corp.	4.65	4.65	4.5	4.6	475,000
30	5.7	Paxys Inc.	5.7	5.9	5.7	5.8	84,000
472.5	367.5	eTelecare Global Solutions Inc.	372.5	372.5	367.5	370	24,250
		MINING					
0.017	0.0085	Abra Mining and Industrial Corp.	0.01	0.01	0.0095	0.01	38,000,000
7.2	3.6	Apex Mining Company Inc. A	6	6	6	6	187,000
7.4	3.85	Apex Mining Company Inc. B	6.5	6.5	6.3	6.3	180,000
21.25	8.1	Atlas Cons. Mining and Dev't Corp.	13	13	13	13	433,400
20.75	8.9	Benguet Corp. A	19.25	19.25	18.75	19.25	206,900
12.75	2.1	Dizon Copper Silver Mines Inc.	9.3	9.3	8.8	8.8	111,000
3.1	0.6	GEOGRACE Resources Philippines Inc.	1.82	1.88	1.76	1.78	46,005,000
0.56	0.18	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. A	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.48	49,670,000
0.61	0.22	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. B	0.5	0.52	0.49	0.5	20,270,000
0.038	0.017	Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	86,400,000
0.041	0.02	Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	10,600,000
30	3.6	NIHAO Minerals Resources Int'l Inc.	19.75	20	19	19	1,193,600
0.021	0.0096	Omico Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.013	130,600,000
0.015	0.007	Omico Corp. - Warrants	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	20,000,000
11.25	3.5	Philex Mining Corp.	9.7	9.7	9.4	9.5	5,254,000
49.5	14.75	Semirara Mining Corp.	43	43	43	43	50,000
1.36	0.65	United Paragon Mining Corp.	0.73	0.73	0.72	0.73	650,000
1.8	0.99	Vulcan Industrial and Mining Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.08	144,000
		OIL					
0.58	0.27	Basic Energy Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	3,910,000
0.029	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. A	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	10,100,000
0.03	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. B	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	3,000,000
29	11.75	PNOC Exploration Corp. B	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	10,000
13.75	9	Petroenergy Resources Corp.	10	10	9.9	9.9	110,000
0.032	0.0098	The Philodrill Corp.	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	196,800,000

AVERAGES			VOLUME	VALUE
Financial	847.27 DOWN	11.06	9,895,780	246,971,085.00
Industrial	4,389.44 DOWN	16.38	27,767,900	465,624,735.00
Holding Firms	1,915.31 DOWN	52.25	181,105,730	388,527,080.00
Property	1,457.45 DOWN	35.19	188,814,400	667,615,565.00
Service	1,792.47 DOWN	12.12	102,169,710	534,619,865.00
Mining & Oil	8,056.65 DOWN	283.71	603,984,900	218,037,300.00
All Shares Index	2,146.44 DOWN	29.97		
PSEI	3,486.82 DOWN	51.87		
		GRAND TOTALS	1,113,738,420	2,521,395,630.00

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SOURCE: TECHNISTOCK, PSE

In 4th quarter, economy seen to grow by 6.9%

By Michelle V. Remo

GDP likely to exceed official full-year target of 6-7%

THE ECONOMY IS EXPECTED TO grow by 6.9 percent in the fourth quarter from a year ago, buoyed partly by increasing investments in the services sector and higher spending for infrastructure development, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

The forecast meant that the economy would exceed the government's official target of between 6.1 and 7 percent for the full year.

"The growth drivers for the fourth quarter will still be the same—the services sector and higher construction, among others," Augusto Santos, acting Neda director general, , said in a briefing yesterday.

The Neda's fourth-quarter growth forecast, measured in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), is consistent with its latest full-year GDP growth projection of between 6.9 and 7.3 percent adopted by the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee.

The DBCC, of which Neda is a member, last Friday held a meeting to update its macroeconomic forecasts for the year and targets over the medium term.

In the first three quarters of the year, the economy grew by an average of 7.1 percent year-on-year, beating most expectations.

The services sector, which covers the booming business process outsourcing (BPO) group, grew year-on-year by 8.2 percent in the first three quarters. This was higher than the 6.1-percent expansion recorded in the same period last year.

The industry sector, which includes the sub-sectors of construction and mining, grew by 6.8 percent in the first three quarters, faster than the 4.9 percent recorded in the same period last year.

Construction alone grew by 19.3 percent, more than double the growth of 7.3 percent recorded a year earlier.

Economic managers said this was a reflection largely of the higher government spending on infrastructure and partly on private investments.

The agriculture, fisheries and forestry (AFF) sector, hampered by typhoons that visited the country this year, grew by 4.6 percent in the first three quarters—slower than the 4.8 percent growth recorded in the same period last year.

For next year, the DBCC expects the economy to grow anywhere between 6.3 and 7 percent.

Santos said that the slower-than-expected growth in exports, which was blamed on weak demand from the US and Japanese economies—two of the Philippines' biggest export markets—had a drag-down effect on the economy this year.

The strong peso was also cited as a reason for the failure of the exports sector to stay on track of the full-year target.

Exports grew by an average of 5.4 percent in the first 10 months of 2007 from a year ago, compared with the full-year target of 11 percent.

Santos said exports would likely register an average growth of 6 to 7 percent this year.

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Gov't cuts '08 export target to 8%

From page B1

Earlier, Santos said growth in exports would likely hit 8 percent. But yesterday, he further reduced this forecast to between 6 and 7 percent.

Traders largely blame the strong peso for the slower-than-target growth in exports this year. The supposed 11-percent target was set with the assumption that the peso would average between 47 and 49 to a US dollar this year. But the local currency has recently broken into the 41-to-a-dollar territory.

From January to November, the peso-dollar rate averaged P46.6:$1, Neda data showed.

The sharp appreciation of the peso, which recently marked a seven-and-a-half-year high, is credited partly to the rise in dollar inflows, such as in the form of investments and remittances from overseas workers.

The weakening of the greenback due to the slowdown of the US economy was also blamed for the bullish peso.

Although exports were badly hit, the rise of the peso still has its upside: It has tempered inflation this year despite rising oil prices in the world market.

The strong peso also helped the government trim its foreign-currency denominated debts.

But monetary officials said there was a need to arrest the peso's steep climb, saying that its sharp appreciation has been hurting exporters.

RP firm files ...

From page B1

tion Competencies" (Innovate), were for the exclusive use of the PIL program during its implementation."

The conflict arose in October 2006 when Microsoft distributed CDs as part of its corporate giveaways during the 2nd Innovative Teachers Leadership Awards in the Philippines and the 2006 Education Summit.

The CD, bearing Microsoft's name and copyright mark, contained a portable document format (PDF) file of Innovate.

"By illegally copying and distributing Innovate in digital format, Microsoft has enabled easy access and reproduction to an effective learning tool that promotes Microsoft products," the school said.

"Microsoft should apply the Golden Rule," Southeastern's counsel Mendoza said. "They should apply to themselves the same standard they use for their [copyright] infringement cases."

The lawyer described the damage to the school in terms of lost income as "incalculable," especially since it is difficult to determine how much software Microsoft has been able to sell once potential buyers became proficient with them with the help of Southeastern's manual.

"Southeastern College has never given Microsoft or any other person authority to reproduce and/or distribute Innovate in CDs," he added. "[The school] only consented to the printing of 10,000 book copies. The [production] of the CDs, as well as its copying and distribution, grossly violates Southeastern College's economic rights to its intellectual property."

An estimated 700 copies of the Innovate CDs were distributed during the two events, although the company said that more could have been produced after the initial distribution, given the ease of reproducing PDF files.

For its part, Microsoft Philippines Inc. said it was "disappointed" with Southeastern College's decision to file the lawsuit.

"They brought this matter to our attention a year ago and we worked hard to resolve it, but without success," the company said. "For all intents and purposes, this is a purely local matter which does not involve Microsoft Corp. (the US parent firm)."

"We worked with [Southeastern] over the years to provide this curriculum to these teachers free of charge, including 10,000 hard copies that we provided to public school teachers and that SEC does not dispute," the company added. "We are disappointed with and deny [its] claim that we have improperly distributed additional copies of the curriculum reproduced on CD."

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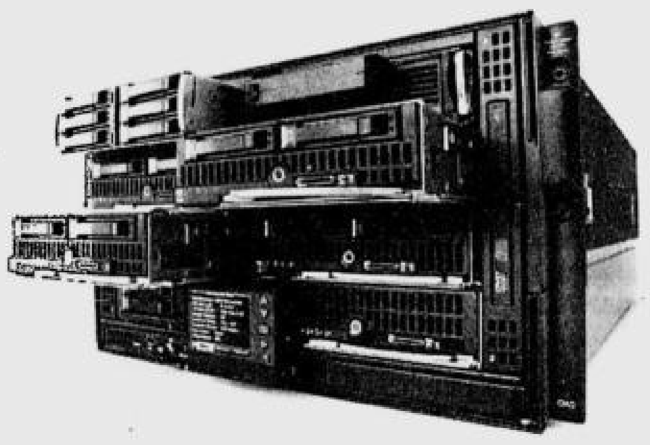

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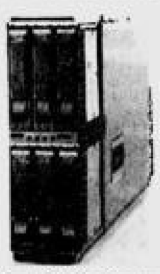
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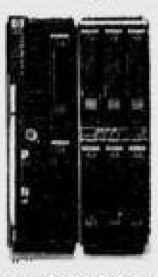
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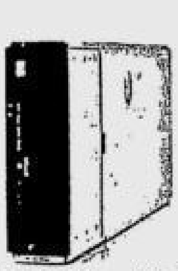
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Reduced use of structured loans eyed

ODA loan that comes in cash, usually US dollar-denominated

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT Authority has urged the government to reduce its use of the so-called "structured loans" to help temper the sharp rise of the peso.

"Structured loans" are direct cash, usually denominated in US dollars, extended by foreign lenders if a recipient country was able to implement suggested reforms for economic development. A World Bank loan extended to the Philippine government as an incentive for reducing its budget deficit is an example.

It is a type of official development assistance (ODA), the other types being "project" and "program" loans.

"These are dollars that directly enter the country and pushes the peso up. These kinds of loans have to be reviewed because we don't need that much dollars," Augusto Santos, acting Neda director general said in a briefing yesterday.

Santos said the Neda preferred the project type of ODA loans. Under this, the government can simply ask the lending institution to pay for the equipment and materials needed in the completion of a project. By doing so, proceeds of the loan do not enter the country.

For this year, he said, the country was expected to avail itself of $300 million to $500 million worth of structured loans. He is proposing that the amount be reduced for next year.

It was reported earlier that the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) revised the government's borrowing program for next year to a mix of 70 local and 30 foreign loans, from the original target mix of 64:36.

The reduction in the share of foreign borrowings to the total was meant to temper the rise of the peso. More foreign borrowings could lead to further buildup of the country's dollar holdings, which was seen to result in stronger peso.

Santos said the cut in the share of foreign borrowings should be done by canceling' some structured loans originally proposed for next year.

"About 15 years ago, we (Philippines) needed structured loans because at that time, we didn't even have enough dollars to buy our oil import requirements. This time, however, we don't need so much dollars," he said.

Quoting figures from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Santos said the country had about $32 billion in gross international reserves.

The rise in dollar inflows, from overseas Filipino workers and foreign investors, and the weakening of the dollar resulted in the sharp rise of the peso.

The peso recently broke into the 41-to-a-dollar territory, and averaged 46.6 to $1 in January to November. This was higher than the P47- 49:$1 assumed by economic managers when they drafted this year's budget.

SCTEx seen to open in March next year

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE P21-BILLION SUBIC-Clark-Tarlac Expressway will start commercial operation in March 2008 as the contractors rush to complete both of the project's two sections, according to the Bases Conversion Development Authority.

BCDA president and chief executive Narciso L. Abaya said that although the construction of Package 2, the 43.27-kilometer Clark-Tarlac section, was expected to be finished within the year, the agency preferred to open both sections of the SCTEx at the same time.

The other section is the 50-km Subic-Clark leg which, like Package 2, is expected to cut travel time along each stretch from at least two hours to about half an hour.

"Issues that have contributed to delays in finishing SCTEx has been resolved, including those about interchanges," Abaya said.

Faster movement of goods and people along the Subic-Clark corridor should spur more investments and greater economic development in the region, he added.

Early last November, the BCDA announced that it had awarded to a group that included First Philippine Holdings Corp. the interim contract to operate and maintain the SCTEx.

The contract provides that FPHC and its joint venture partners Egis Road Operation and Tollways Management Corp. would take charge of the SCTEx for six months up to a year starting from the expressway's opening early in 2008.

The BCDA resorted to an interim operator as the bidding for a long-term contract failed twice. Abaya said a third bidding would was planned not later than 2009.

Abaya said the BCDA would engage a single service provider for 10 years, unless there would be changes or the contract would be ended for some reason.

PhilAm units buy 76% stake in Primus Finance

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL GROUP Inc.'s PhilAm Savings Bank and Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co. have entered into a deal to jointly acquire a 76-percent stake in Primus Finance & Leasing Inc., the local auto financing company of American car giant Ford.

AIG's banking and life insurance units signed the agreement with Ford Credit International Inc. to acquire the latter's controlling stake in Primus Finance as part of a strategy to expand its Philippine presence and to grow PhilAm Bank's loan portfolio, the group said in a statement yesterday.

"This acquisition attests to our commitment to expand our consumer finance operations in the Philippines. The purchase will allow us to significantly strengthen our retail auto loan business and, at the same time, enter the wholesale auto finance market," said Joven Reyes, AIG PhilAm Bank president and CEO.

Under the agreement, Philam Bank will acquire 24.5 percent of the finance company while Philamlife will own the 51.5 percent.

The group declined to disclose the amount involved in the deal but noted that its buy-in would be finalized by January next year, when regulatory approvals are expected to be obtained.

Primus Finance was established in 1999 and provides automotive financing to Ford and Mazda dealers throughout the Philippines. It is a part of Ford Motor Credit Company LLC, one of the world's largest automotive finance companies, which has supported the sale of Ford products since 1959.

Ford Motor Credit is an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of Ford Motor Co. It provides automotive financing for Ford, Lincoln, Mercury, Jaguar, Land Rover, Mazda and Volvo dealers and customers.

AIG is a world leader in insurance and financial services, and the leading international insurance organization with operations in more than 130 countries and jurisdictions. It serves commercial, institutional and individual customers through an extensive worldwide property-casualty and life insurance network. In addition, AIG companies are leading providers of retirement services, financial services and asset management around the world.

Japan businesses oppose planned Epira amendment

By Abigail L. Ho

AS WITH OTHER FOREIGN BUSINESS chambers in the country, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines Inc. (JCCIPI) has urged Congress not to amend the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, even appealing to Malacañang to prevent any change in the law.

"We believe that amending Epira now would reverse the gains of your power reforms thus far and endanger investor confidence. Instead, we encourage the government to be steadfast with the full and proper implementation of the Epira to achieve its primary objectives of providing a competitive and vibrant electricity industry that can play its role in making the Philippines competitive," JCCIPI president Toshifumi Inami said in a letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

He said the JCCIPI welcomed the passage of the Epira in June 2001 as it gave the country's power sector a balanced and stable regulatory environment.

With most of the reforms contained in the law already in progress, he said there was really no need to amend the existing law. Instead, the government should just work on implementing the rest of the provisions that had yet to be fulfilled.

"We were apprised by private stakeholders that most of the reforms are already in progress and, as a result, the structure of the electricity sector is becoming truly more competitive. For instance, the wholesale electricity spot market is fully functioning and the generation sub-sector is steadily drawing a number of new and foreign investors to eventually make up a competitive market," he said.

"The privatization of the generation assets of National Power Corp. is gaining momentum and can hopefully be replicated with the privatization of Napocor's independent power producer contracts as well," he added.

The Joint Foreign Chambers in the Philippines, of which the JCCIPI was a member, earlier said that if the proposed amendments were being pushed just so retail competition and open access could be declared, it would be better for Congress, the Executive and private sector to just work together to implement the law in its existing form and not change anything.

Landbank sells bad assets worth ₱3.5B

STATE-OWNED LAND BANK of the Philippines has unloaded P3.5 billion worth of bad assets through the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) framework.

In an international auction held last Dec. 12, the bank sold three asset pools—two of which were bagged by French financial institution Calyon while the third was won by local firm Pacific Wide Realty and Development Corp.

"This is another feat for the bank in our continuing efforts to dispose of our nonperforming assets," Landbank president Gilda Pico said in a statement on Saturday.

She said the bad assets sold were composed of pieces of commercial and residential property in various parts of the country.

Ernst and Young Transaction Advisory Services Inc. served as the bank's financial adviser for the transaction.

It was the second international auction held by Landbank using the SPV framework. In 2004, Landbank disposed of P13.5 billion worth of nonperforming loans in what was then considered a landmark transaction for the Philippines in terms of size and number of bidders.

Doris C. Dumlao

BIR corporate income tax take up 18%

THE GOVERNMENT'S CORPORATE income tax collection posted a double-digit increase in January to October, buoyed by improved corporate earnings and the increase in corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent.

A report submitted by the Bureau of Internal Revenue to the Department of Finance showed that its corporate income tax collection reached P185 billion in the first 10 months of the year, up 18 percent or P28.2 billion from P156.8 billion in the same period last year.

In October, alone, the corporate income tax collection rose 12 percent to P14.76 billion, from P13.18 billion in the same month last year.

The government raised the corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent, as mandated by the Value-Added Tax Reform (RVAT) law, in November last year.

Finance officials said the increase in the collection of corporate income tax was also boosted by higher corporate earnings so far seen this year. Several listed firms, especially the blue-chips, reported income growth to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The officials said the collection performance was consistent with the better-than-expected performance of the economy.

The National Economic and Development Authority earlier reported that the economy grew 7.1 percent in the first three quarters of the year in terms of gross domestic products. This boosted confidence that the official target of 6.1 to 6.7 percent for the whole year would be surpassed.

The Neda said the fastest growth was recorded by the services sector, which covered the booming business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. Services grew 8.2 percent year-on-year in the first three quarters, faster than the 6.1 percent recorded in the same period last year.

BIR data showed that of the total corporate income tax collection in the first 10 months, P89.453 billion was composed of the companies' own liabilities, while the balance was accounted for by income taxes withheld. The Tax Code requires large taxpayers to withhold part of the income tax liabilities of their suppliers.

Despite the increased collection from this sector, the BIR still fell short of its overall tax collection target for the 10-month period.

The finance department, mother agency of the BIR, earlier said the BIR's total tax collection stood at P575.4 billion in January to October, or P54-billion short of its goal of P629.5 billion for the period.

The shortfall was recorded in other tax types, including excise tax on sin products, the BIR said.

Michelle V. Remo

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Ethanol project in Mindanao to tap CARP land

By Ronnel W. Domingo

SOUTH BUKIDNON BIOENERGY Inc. has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Agrarian Reform on the cultivation of agricultural land awarded to agrarian reform beneficiaries.

SBBI said in a statement that the MOU was aimed at setting the groundwork for consolidation of new areas that would be used to produce feedstock for the firm's planned fuel ethanol production facility in Bukidnon.

The company said its P4-billion integrated plant would have to be supported by 10,000 hectares of land planted to sugarcane.

The firm added that the plant would provide a market for prospective sugarcane farmers within the 25-kilometer radius of the Kibawe Agro-Industrial Zone in Bukidnon and North Cotabato.

Half of the fuel ethanol plant's cane supply needs would come from agrarian reform beneficiaries and small farmers with underproductive and idle lands, SBBI added.

The facility, which includes a fuel ethanol distillery, would have a capacity of 150,000 liters daily or 45 million liters yearly.

Based on the required minimum 5-percent ethanol-blended gasoline under the Biofuels Law of 2007, SBBI's factory—which is expected to start operations in 2010—would provide volume equivalent to 15 percent of the country's ethanol supply needs.

Also, the facility's power generation component would produce 10 megawatts of electricity through cogeneration, 4 MW of which would be sold to the local electric cooperative.

Last October, the Board of Investments granted tax incentives and other perks to the SBBI project.

According to the BOI, SBBI's venture was qualified for incentives as it would help make available cleaner gasoline.

Ethanol, which would be obtained from processing sugar cane, helps lessen the consumption of gasoline as it is blended with fuel to produce a mix that burns cleaner.

SBBI is a joint venture between Green Renewable Holdings Inc. and BronzeOak Philippines, which is in turn a partnership between United Kingdom's BronzeOak and sugar magnate Jose Maria T. Zabaleta.

Lopez to invest in energy, shipbuilding in Iloilo, Negros

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE LOPEZ FAMILY plans to invest in shipbuilding and energy generation projects in Iloilo and Negros Island.

Oscar Lopez, chair of the Lopez group of companies, said in a recent visit here that Iloilo had the resources needed to make it big in the shipbuilding industry.

Lopez said on the sidelines of the Iloilo Investment Forum held here late last month that the plan was to build large cargo ships, ranging from 100,000 to 200,000 gross tons.

This would be the first time that the Lopezes would venture into shipbuilding in the 81 years that the Lopez family has been in business, according to Ricardo Yatco, vice president for business development of the First Philippine Holdings Corp. (FPHC), one of the holding companies under the Lopez Group.

Started in 1926 by Ilonggo brothers Eugenio Sr. and Fernando Lopez, the group has interests in communication, utilities, power generation and distribution and property and construction, through a number of holding companies.

Yatco, who was brought in by Lopez to scout for possible sites of the project in Iloilo, said the group preferred to tap a foreign partner with experience in shipbuilding.

Lopez also announced the group's intention to bid for control of the Palinpinon geothermal plant in Valencia town, Negros Oriental.

The geothermal plant, consisting of two power stations, is located between the islands of Panay and Cebu. It supplies 60 mw of power to Panay island.

Last month, the Lopez group took control of PNOC-EDC after the Lopez-led consortium Red Vulcan Holdings Corp. submitted the highest bid at P58.5 billion for the remaining 60-percent government stake in PNOC's geothermal subsidiary.

Aboitiz holds off payment of real property taxes, fees

By Villamor Visaya Jr.
Inquirer Northern Luzon

SANTIAGO CITY—SN-ABOITIZ POWER INC., operator of the 360-megawatt Magat dam hydroelectric power plant, has decided to suspend payment of its real property taxes and business fees here until a boundary dispute between Ifugao and Isabela is settled.

Rodolfo Azanza, representative of SN-Aboitiz, a partnership between Statkraft Norway and Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc., said the firm was "very much willing to immediately pay" the taxes once the court declares what province was entitled to receive the money.

Azanza said the amount of taxes and fees that it should pay could not yet be quantified because it has yet to receive final assessments from the provinces.

Officials of Isabela and Ifugao want a 50-50 sharing of fees.

Isabela and Ifugao claimed they were entitled to the taxes and fees as some of the power plant's turbines fall under their jurisdiction.

Antonio Ramos, SN-Aboitiz special adviser and construction supervisor, said the firm would resurvey the Isabela-Ifugao boundary to help settle the dispute.

Napocor, former operator of the power plant, paid at least P29 million each to Isabela and Ifugao as their share of the franchise tax as provided by a 2001 agreement.

Azanza said, however, that despite the suspension of payments, SN-Aboitiz has been putting one centavo a kilowatt-hour of sold power into energy regulation fund; which would be given to the Department of Energy.

He said the firm released an initial P2 million to support three development and infrastructure projects in Diadi in Nueva Vizcaya, Alfonso Lista in Ifugao and Dallao in Cordon, Isabela.

Cordillera attracts investments

By Delmar Cariño
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET— CORDILLERA'S plan to become North Luzon's fruit, flower, coffee and vegetable basket will get a needed boost from the completion of two major road networks here, a top agriculture official said here on Friday.

These are the Halsema Highway and the Bontoc-Tabuk-Lugbuagan Road, which the government hopes to finish to the tune of P2.3 billion before 2010.

The roads would allow the region to drastically cut the time it takes to deliver its fruits and vegetables to the Metro Manila market.

The province supplies close to 75 percent of Metro Manila's vegetables.

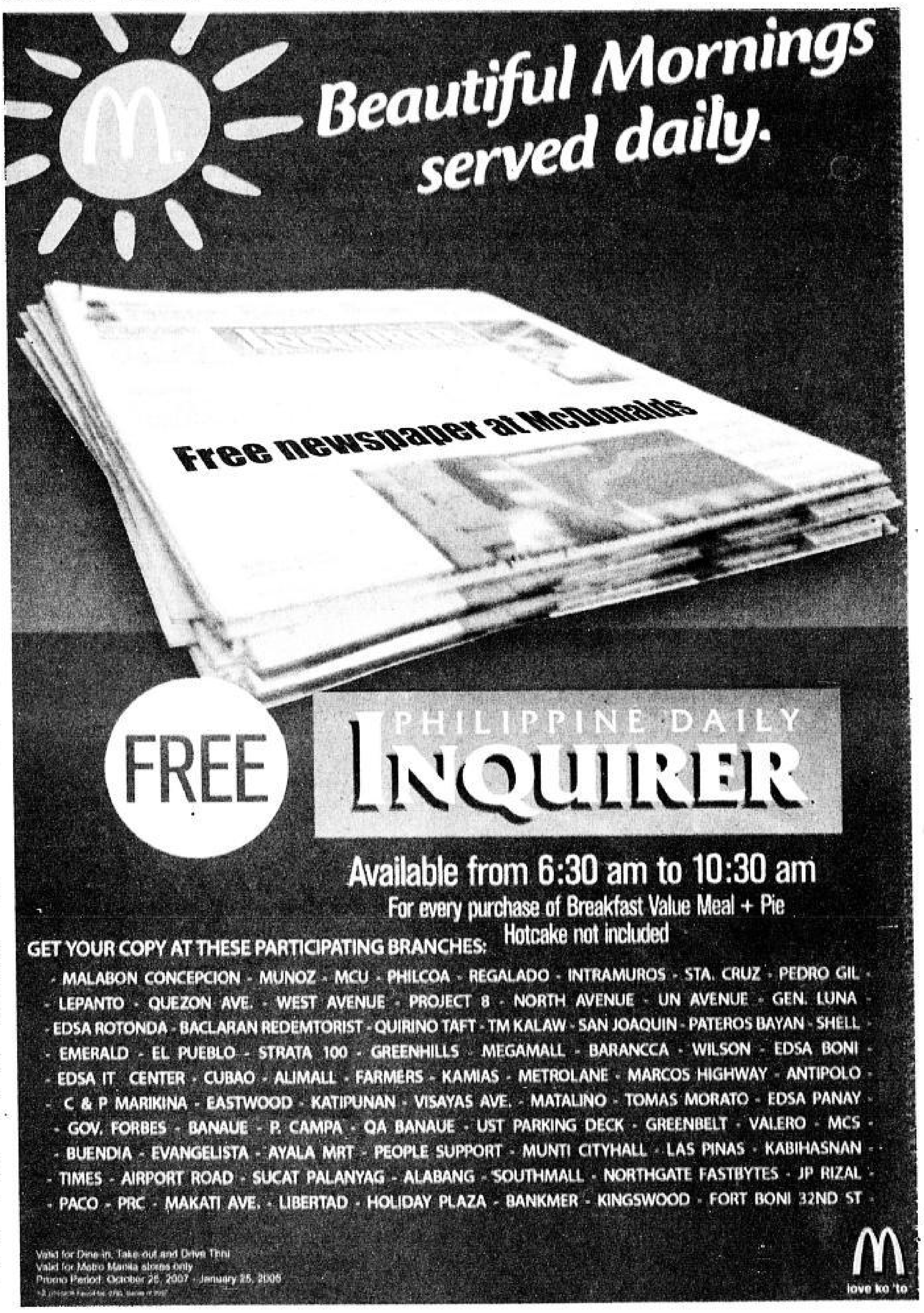
Roy Imperial, North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle (NLAQ) director, said the near completion of two major road networks in the region would bring in more investments to the region.

"The next five years will be crucial for the Cordillera because investments are moving from highly urbanized centers to the provinces where there are resources to be tapped for agribusiness," he said.

The NLAQ is one of the super regions that President Macapagal-Arroyo had envisioned to bring development to the countryside in her 2004 State of the Nation Address.

The construction of tramlines, cold storage facilities and processing centers in Benguet would play a crucial role in gaining for the region more investment points, he said.

"Benguet's role in the next few years will be crucial. The completion of more farm-to-market roads will tell a lot on the development of its vegetable industry," he said.



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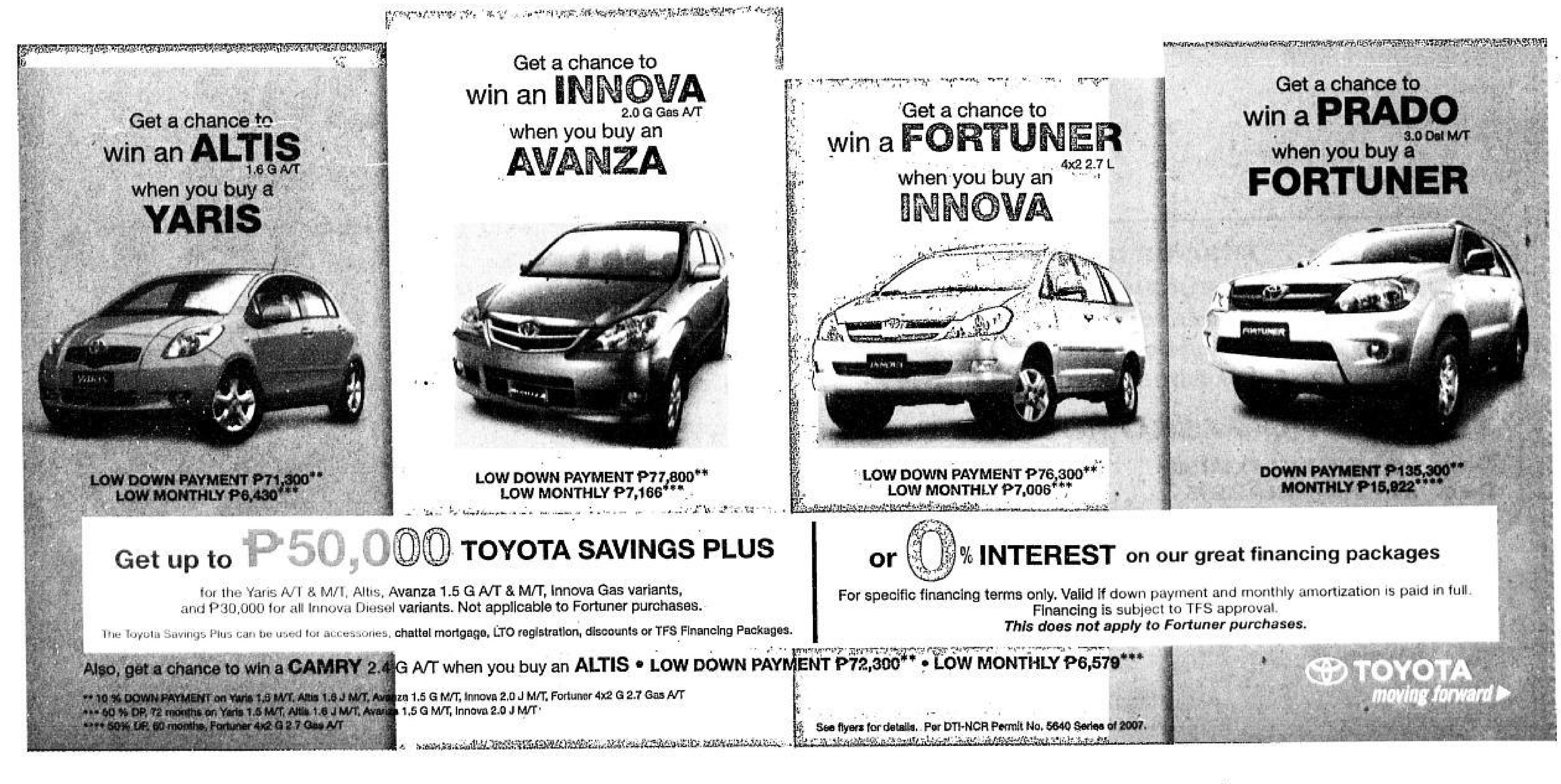

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See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5640 Series of 2007.

TOYOTA moving forward

Illam posts best finish in 35 years

THE INTERNATIONAL LITTLE League Association of Manila, or Illam, outdid itself last season, having had its best ever finish in its 35-year history.

Three teams, the Illam Major Girls, Junior Boys and Philippine Big Girls, swept the regionals and went on to represent not just the Philippines but the entire Asia-Pacific region at the World Series in the United States. While all three teams did their country proud, the Illam Junior Boys excelled and swept the International Division before narrowly losing to Hawaii in the World Series finals.

This unprecedented success would not have been possible without the great dedication of the players and their coaches and managers, the heartfelt support of the many families involved and, of course, the unstinting support of Illam's corporate sponsors.

The Big League Girls were backed by First Philippine Holdings, Enervon C/Unilab, PCSO, Meralco, Tadeco, PJL Group of Companies, Insular Life, OOCL and Directory Philippines Corp.

The Junior Boys, meanwhile, were supported by the Presidential Management Staff/Office of the President, Pet One and Suy Sing.

The Major Girls drew strength from Stradcom, Del Monte, ABS-CBN Foundation, Ayala Land, ATR Kim Eng, Jollibee, China Airlines, Tyke Rack Inc, Doris Ho and Suy Sing.

JOEY PEPPERONI OPENS AT ROBINSONS PLACE MANILA

Joey Pepperoni specializes in contemporary Italian cuisine with a fittingly delectable twist. Its signature dishes are made of the freshest ingredients and are thoroughly prepared to suit even the most discriminating palate. Very reasonably priced, and yet offering a winning fusion of tasteful variety, excellent service and a hearty dining experience, Joey Pepperoni has rapidly become a hit among working urbanites, families and students alike. Seen at the grand opening of Joey Pepperoni at Robinsons Place Manila is Boy II Quizon, who led the opening ceremonies. Joey Pepperoni's core team was also present as it inaugurated the first mall-based outlet. Joey Pepperoni is located at Level 4, Robinsons Place Manila. For inquiries, call 383-6737.

Exatech opens new showroom at TriNoma

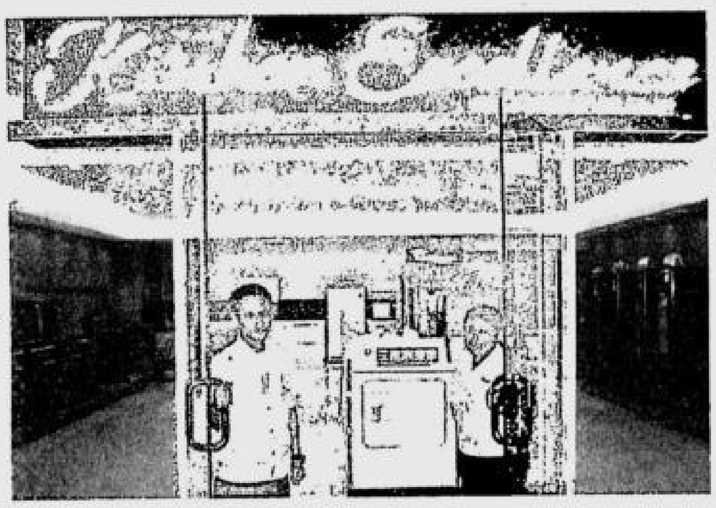
EXATECH INC, PHILIPPINE DIStributor of world-class Whirlpool, GlemGas, and Fujidenzo home and commercial appliances, recently announced the opening of its newest showroom at the TriNoma mall named "Kitchen Excellence by Exatech".

TriNoma, short for Triangle North Mall, is located at Edsa corner North Avenue in Quezon City.

According to Exatech Inc marketing manager Joy Catiis, "We're excited about the opening of Kitchen Excellence by Exatech, which is a great destination for your kitchen needs. With the opening of this showroom, our products will be available and accessible to more customers in Quezon City."

"So for those who are planning to do a makeover of their kitchens or simply planning to purchase a brand new home or commercial appliance, the Exatech showroom at TriNoma is the best place to visit. Customers can expect the best possible deals, prices, and excellent customer service at the showroom," Catiis said.

Located at the ground floor of TriNoma, the Exatech showroom features some of the newest and latest kitchen products, such as refrigerators and freezers, cooking ranges, microwave ovens, and other cooking equipment. Also available are washing machines, dryers, and split-type airconditioners, among other appliances.



All products bear the world-renowned Whirlpool, GlemGas, and Fujidenzo brand names.

A trusted global brand, Whirlpool is a leading manufacturer of major home appliances. Whirlpool products are known for their innovative features, state-of-the-art technology, efficiency, durability, and design.

A name trusted by culinary professionals, GlemGas from Italy is reputed for its highly efficient cooking appliances, which are exported to Europe, Australia, United States, and Asia.

Fujidenzo is a premiere name in affordable, high-quality home and commercial appliances manufactured using Japanese technology.

Products at the Exatech showroom are available through cash or card purchases. According to Exatech, customers can look forward to promos, premium items and discounts for every purchase.

For more information on the Exatech showroom at TriNoma, customers can call 712-0535.

CARTRIDGE WORLD ISLANDS' ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

Cartridge World Islands Philippines Inc held its annual strategic planning session on Nov. 24 at KFC Jupiter Branch. In attendance were all its Philippine franchisees (back row, from left) Ced Ramirez, (Pasong Tamo), Ken Chung (Garnet), JC Mercado (Leviste), Cocoy Mercado (Shaw). Front row, from left: Cez Ramirez, Gene Chung, Babylyn and Bruce Newfield, Mercy Villanueva (Sucat), and Bim Mercado. For franchising inquiries, call Bruce Newfield at 893-7012 or log on to www.cartridge-world.com.ph.

Pacific Internet launches Fourth Quarter Blast

PACIFIC INTERNET, THE LARGEST TELCO-independent Internet Communications Service Provider by geographic reach in the Asia Pacific region, has just launched its yearend promo-Fourth Quarter Blast. The Fourth Quarter Blast is a rewards program targeting all new customers of Pacific Internet Philippines for wired and wireless leased lines of 256kbps and above; Optimaxx variants; and other products bundled with leased lines such as Sentinel and Coloc. This promotion is ongoing until Jan. 31, 2008. Various exciting premium items such as a Digicams, WiFi switches, laptops, Cisco routers, Jollibee gift certificates and free one-month subscriptions await new customers when they subscribe to regular or premium plans of Pacific Internet for the above services. New Pacific Internet customers will receive the premium items within two weeks after payment of the initial fees for their subscriptions and the submission of corresponding forms.

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Dec. 18 - 22 : ILAW NG PASKO
(LANTERN FLOAT PARADE)

HIMIG NG PASKO
(CHILDREN'S CHOIR CONTEST)

TUGTOG NG PASKO (NIGHTLY BAND CONCERT):
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BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project / Brief Description	Supply and delivery of one (1) set Platinum Tray with 61 cups per BSP specifications
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	**P 4,950,000.00**
Delivery Period	Per BSP Terms of Reference

Prospective bidders should have undertaken a similar requirement awarded and completed from Y2002 to present amounting to at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC). The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	**Starting 18 December 2007**
2. Pre-bid Conference	**04 January 2008; 4:00 P.M.**
3. Opening of Bids	**22 January 2008; 2:00 P.M.**
4. Bid Evaluation	These shall be in accordance with the prescribed periods allowed in the Implementing Rules & Regulations (IRR-A) of R.A. No. 9184 dated 10 January 2003, as amended.
5. Post-qualification	
6. Notice of Award	

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **P2,475.00.**

The BSP assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

The BSP reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **MELPIN A. GONZAGA**
Vice-Chairman

(PDI–Dec. 18, 2007)

Standard Form Number: SF-GOOD-05
Revised on: July 28, 2004

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
CENTER FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT-CARAGA
Butuan City
Pizarro Street, Corner Narra Road
Tel. # (085) 342-52-08/342-5667 / Fax: 225-2970

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Department of Health-Caraga, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/ manufacturers/ distributors/ contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project	: REPAIR & RENOVATION OF CHD-OFFICE BUILDING
Location	: DOH-CENTER FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT-CARAGA
Brief Description	: RENOVATION OF BUILDING
Approved Budget For the Contract	: **PhP 6,500,000.00**
Contract Duration	: 180 CD
Delivery Period	: MARCH 2008

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	*Schedule*
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	January 8-15, 2008
2. Pre-bid Conference	January 18, 2008
3. Submission of Letters of Intent and Application for Eligibility *(If single-stage bidding is used, delete this activity)*	January 1-7, 2008
4. Opening of Bids	January 30, 2008
5. Bid Evaluation	February 1-7, 2008
6. Post-qualification	February 1-7, 2008
7. Notice of Award	February 8-15, 2008

For single-stage bidding:

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **Five Thousand Pesos Only (PhP5,000.00)** to the Department of Health – Center for Health Development – Caraga Cashier Section.

The Department of Health – Center for Health Development – Caraga assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **FLORMINDA B. TEJANO, DPA**
BAC Chairman

(PDI–Dec. 18 & 25, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National/Citizenship	Position
SHINRYO (PHILIPPINES) COMPANY, INC. Rms. 403-406 One Corporate Plaza, 845 A. Arnaiz Ave., Makati City	Katsuki Takahama Japanese	Vice-President for Operation and Engineering
ASL LOGISTICS WORLDWIDE INC. 504 Phoenix Bldg., Recoletos St., Intramuros, Manila	Byung Jo Kim Korean	Manager
24/7 CUSTOMER PHILIPPINES, INC. 8/F Insular Life Building, Ayala Ave., Makati City	Jean-Marc Philippe Michel Hauducoeur Swiss	President
WATERFRONT CONTAINER LEASING CO., INC. Mercantile Insurance Bldg., Rm.302, Gen. Luna cor. Beaterio St., Intramuros, Manila	John Boon Wee American	Owner's Representative
RP-SAKURA INTERNATIONAL CORP. Suite 509 FEA Bldg., 305-306 Dasmarinas St., Binondo, Manila	Di Wang Chinese	Sales Manager
JAN KAN SOURCING, INC. Tower D, Valencia Condo., Valencia Hills, N. Domingo St., Quezon City	Manish Ramniklal Vaya Indian	Marketing Consultant
JAN KAN SOURCING, INC. Tower D, Valencia Condo., Valencia Hills, N. Domingo St., Quezon City	Nimesh Kumar Dhirajlal Solanki Indian	General Manager
JAN KAN SOURCING, INC. Tower D, Valencia Condo., Valencia Hills, N. Domingo St., Quezon City	Najarali Sunsara Indian	Assistant Manager
CHOI GARDEN SEAFOOD & SHARKSFIN RESTAURANT CORP. No. 12 Annapolis St. cor. Purdue St., San Juan City	Xiansong Kong Chinese	Cook
CHOI GARDEN SEAFOOD & SHARKSFIN RESTAURANT CORP. No. 12 Annapolis St. cor. Purdue St., San Juan City	Weilong Wen Chinese	Cook
CHOI GARDEN SEAFOOD & SHARKSFIN RESTAURANT CORP. No. 12 Annapolis St. cor. Purdue St., San Juan City	Wai Lun Leung Chinese	Cook
CHOI GARDEN SEAFOOD & SHARKSFIN RESTAURANT CORP. No. 12 Annapolis St. cor. Purdue St., San Juan City	Ng Kwai Lam Chinese	Chef
CHOI GARDEN SEAFOOD & SHARKSFIN RESTAURANT CORP. No. 12 Annapolis St. cor. Purdue St., San Juan City	Sai Po Tsang Chinese	Chef
eTELECARE GLOBAL SOLUTIONS, INC. 31/F Cyberone Bldg., Eastwood City, Bagumbayan, Quezon City	Ralph Jude Devadoss Indian	Client Manager
eTELECARE GLOBAL SOLUTIONS, INC. 31/F Cyberone Bldg., Eastwood City, Bagumbayan, Quezon City	Mireille Sivigliani French	Customer Service Associate
eTELECARE GLOBAL SOLUTIONS, INC. 31/F Cyberone Bldg., Eastwood City, Bagumbayan, Quezon City	Cecilia Kokubu Argentinian	Language Consultant
REYES TRAVEL CONSULTANCY Rm. 306 Herald Bldg., 61 Muralla St., Intramuros, Manila	Youngchang Youm Korean	Foreign Consultant
REYES TRAVEL CONSULTANCY Rm. 306 Herald Bldg., 61 Muralla St., Intramuros, Manila	Jongyun Jeong Korean	Foreign Consultant
WELLBEING.COM, INC. No. 2351 Aurora Blvd., Pasay City	Giwon Kong Korean	Supervisor
BUG KYOUNG RESTAURANT Stall 1 & 2, G/F 555 Dakota Mansion, Adriatico St., Malate, Manila	Hye Jung Baek (w/o PARK)	General Manager

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO G. AGRAVANTE
OIC, Regional Director

(PDI – Dec. 18, 2007)

VICTORIAS
MILLING COMPANY, INC.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

TO ALL STOCKHOLDERS:

The Annual Stockholders' Meeting of **VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC. ("VMC")** will be held on **Tuesday, 05 February 2008,** at 8 o'clock in the morning, at **Fairways Dining Room, Manila Golf & Country Club,** Harvard Road, Forbes Park, Makati City.

The Agenda of the meeting will be as follows –

1. Call to Order
2. Certification of Notice to Stockholders and Presence of Quorum.
3. Approval of the Minutes of the Stockholders' Meeting held on 06 February 2007
4. Presentation of the Annual Report
5. Ratification of the Previous Acts and Proceedings of the Board of Directors and Corporate Officers
6. Amendment of the Article III of The Corporation's Articles of Incorporation
7. Appointment of External Auditors
8. Election of Members of the Board of Directors*
9. Other Matters
10. Adjournment

Minutes of the last Regular Stockholders' Meeting and resolutions of the Board of Directors from 06 February 2007 will be available for examination during office hours at the Office of the Corporate Secretary located at Villanueva Gabionza & de Santos Law Offices, 20/F 139 Corporate Center, 139 Valero Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

Stockholders who will not, are unavailable to, or do not expect to attend the meeting in person may, at their option, designate their authorized representatives by means of a **PROXY** which should be submitted to Atty. Santiago T. Gabionza, Jr. at the Office of the Corporate Secretary located at Villanueva Gabionza & de Santos Law Offices, 20/F 139 Corporate Center, 139 Valero Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City, to Atty. Eva A. Vicencio-Rodriguez at VICMICO Compound, Victorias City, Negros Occidental, or to Fidelity Stock Transfers, Inc. at Ground Floor, PHILEX Building, 27 Brixton Corner Fairlane Streets, Pasig City, Metro Manila, **not later than 25 January 2008 at 5 o'clock p.m.**

Only stockholders of record as of 5 o'clock p.m. of **15 January 2008** shall be entitled to vote at this meeting.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CORPORATION IS NOT SOLICITING PROXIES.

With respect to the nominations and elections of all directors, pursuant to Section 4, Article VI and Section 8, Article VIII of the Amended By-Laws, stockholders must submit their nominations to the Nomination, Remuneration & Compensation Committee and the Corporate Secretary at the following addresses not later than 5 o'clock p.m. of 20 December 2007.

NOMINATION, REMUNERATION, & COMPENSATION COMMITTEE
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC.
c/o Villanueva Gabionza & de Santos Law Offices
20/F 139 Valero Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City

ATTY. SANTIAGO T. GABIONZA, JR.
Corporate Secretary
Villanueva Gabionza & de Santos Law Offices
20/F 139 Valero Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City

All nominations should include (i) signature of the nominating stockholder; (ii) acceptance and conformity of the nominee; (iii) curriculum vitae of the nominee; (iv) a statement that the nominee has all the qualifications and none of the disqualifications as set forth in the Corporation's Manual of Corporate Governance, Section 38 of the Securities Regulation Code ("SRC") Rule 38 of the SRC, the SEC Memorandum Circular No. 2, Series of 2002 dated 05 April 2002, and the SEC Memorandum Circular No. 16 dated 28 November 2002; (v) information on the relationship of the nominee to the stockholder submitting the nomination; and (vi) all relevant information about the nominee's qualification.

For the convenience in registering your attendance, please present any form of identification, such as driver's license, passport, voter's I.D., Social Security System Member Card or Taxpayer's Identification Number Card. Your duly designated proxy is required to present a copy of the duly executed proxy form. Registration will start at 7:00 a.m. and will close at 8:00 a.m.

(Sgd.) **SANTIAGO T. GABIONZA, JR.**
Corporate Secretary

(PDI–Dec. 18, 2007)

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Tel. / Fax: (02) 323-2457 ; 838-98-89

INVITATION FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Janitorial Service

Interested parties may avail of the Bid Documents at the Procurement Office in a non-refundable amount of P2,000.00 to be paid in cash.

Pre-Bid Conference shall be held at the Conference room, Office of the Campus Director on December 31, 2007, 9:30 A.M.

(Sgd.) **DR. EDGAR I. GAY-YA**
Chairman
Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI – December 18, 2007)

Matuyatuya National HS batch '82 grand reunion

MATUYATUYA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL BATCH '82 OF MATUYATUYA, Marinduque will hold its grand reunion with a theme "25 years Na Po Kami" on Friday, Dec. 28 at Matuyatuya National High School. Please join and participate in this blissful and meaningful occasion, and reminisce the good old days with its former classmates. For more info, call the following: Joey Valenzuela at 0919-5241406 and Leo Fidelino at 0918-3712521.

OBITUARIES

"From darkness let the light shine!"
Genesis 1:3

Dr. Jose Bunao Cena

Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 16, 2007 at the age of 65.

His bereaved wife **Rebecca**; children (†) **Bernadette, Joseph Moses, Jose Emmanuel**; brothers and sisters, (†) **Tomas, Melania, Consoladora, Cecilio Jr.** and **Julian** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Our Lady of the Poor Chapel, Casimiro Village Phase 1, Pamplona, Las Piñas City.

Interment will be on Thursday, December 20, 2007 at Eternity Memorial Park, Bacoor, Cavite after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring... **INQUIRER OBITUARIES**

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate ❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

In Memory of Our Beloved

DON VICENTE CHUA

on his 32nd Death Anniversary
on December 19, 2007

Masses will be offered on this day at the following churches:

Immaculate Conception Cathedral Pasig City	6:00 AM
Most Holy Redeemer Parish Brixton Hill, Araneta Ave., Q.C.	6:30 AM
St. Francis Parish Church Shaw Blvd. Greenhills	7:00 AM
Mary the Queen Parish Greenhills, San Juan	6:00 PM
Christ the King Green Meadows Ave., Q.C.	6:00 PM

His family requests relatives, friends and the pious readers to join them in prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

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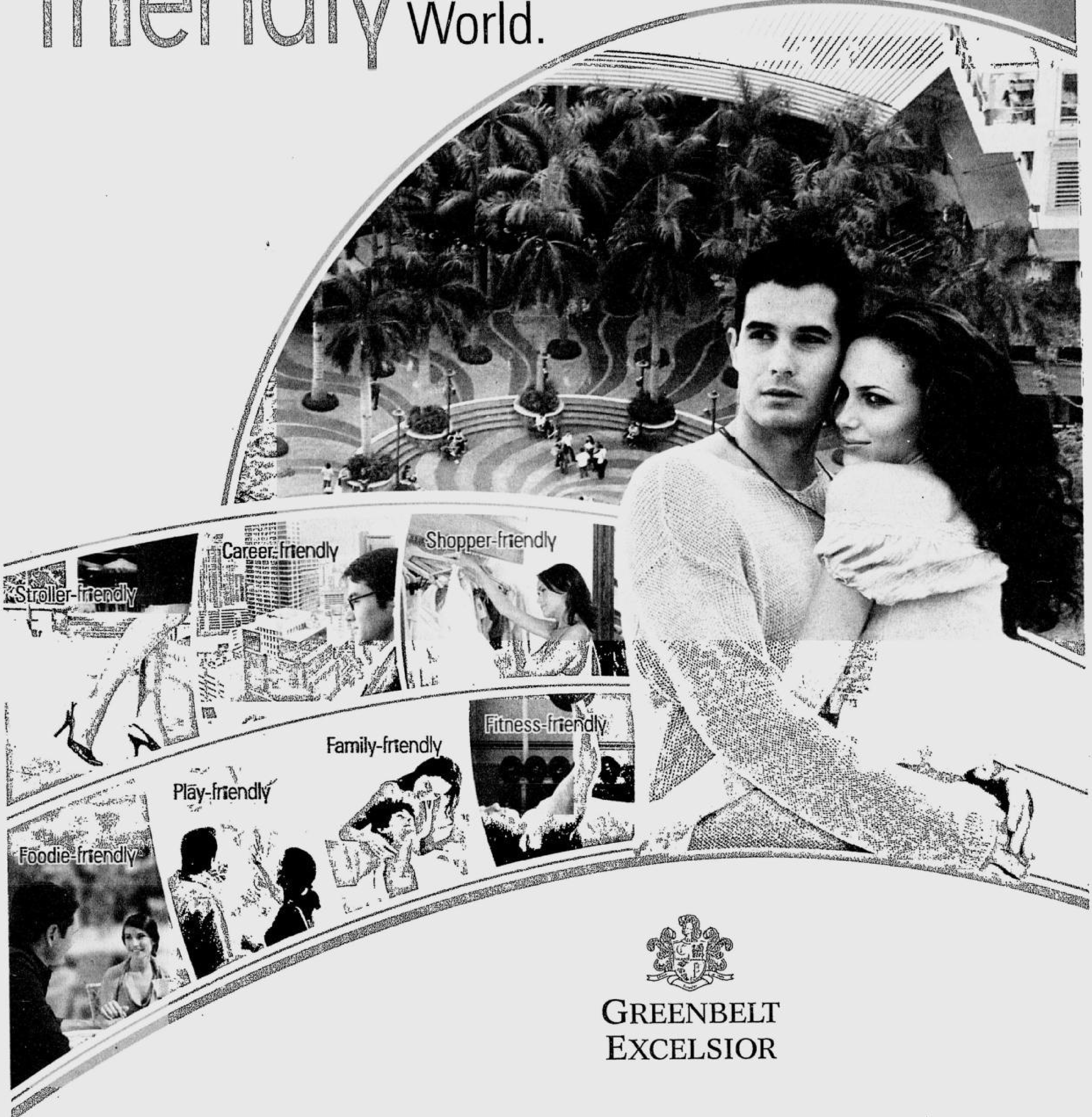
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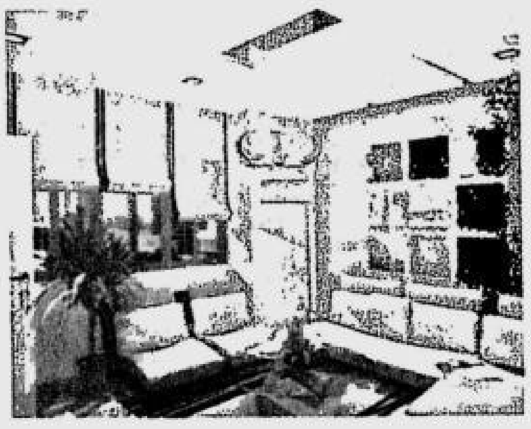

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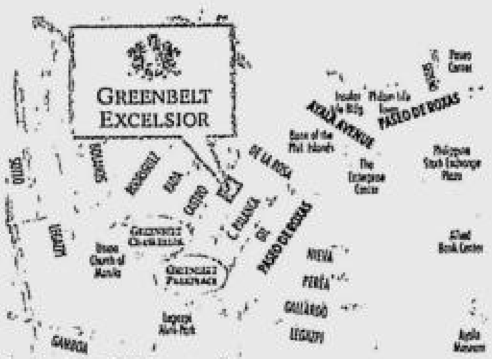
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LIFESTYLE

Website: www.inquirer.net/lifestyle

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) or email us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

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How to fall in love with exercise

By Mitch Felipe
Contributor

BY THIS TIME, YOU may already have a list of New Year's resolutions and, at the top, would probably be one on exercise.

It has been observed and studied that people always find it easy to start something, but find it a challenge to continue.

When career responsibilities, family obligations and personal issues come your way, you use the most popular justification for inactivity, "I have no time."

You might want to work out, but you just cannot find time for it. Or maybe you really do not like the idea of exercising since you think it is hard and you do not see any need for it right now.

When you are in love, you do whatever it takes to make time for the other person. You fall in love for several reasons, such as to feel satisfied or to have fun.

The motivation to find time is so high that a busy schedule can be fixed at once or a favorite late-night show can be missed just to be with the someone that inspires you.

But when it comes to exercise, you always find a list of things to do to delay or skip the activity.

ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADES

Motivation

So focus on what motivates you to act on something. Find out why you delay or why you do not make time for exercise and then find ways to fall in love with it.

Choose to do easier and more convenient activities.

I often observe people using the escalator, even if it is crowded, instead of the stairs. There is already time and means to move. But maybe you are not aware how you can make exercise an easy thing to do.

Exercise will be easier day by day if you start gradually. There are no shortcuts to getting fit and strong. If you decide to start walking today and then do it consistently, a year from now you might find jogging 30 minutes a day the easiest form of exercise.

Do it one step at a time and stop extreme thinking patterns. Once you decide, it should be a lifestyle and allow room for errors that will let you learn and grow.

Choose activities that will give you visible results in less time.

Why do some people with money choose surgery or expensive diet pills over three to five hours a week of physical activity?

When you do not see results at once, you think a physical activity is not worth your time and effort. You are probably just focused on one aspect, like how to remove extra flab in your tummy.

Make realistic goals and focus on the numerous benefits of exercise that will be developed in time like weight loss, improved muscle tone, the opportunity to meet new people, reduced tension, elevated mood, improved coping ability and increased self-worth.

Implement activities that are manageable.

In time management books and seminars, it is always mentioned that people tend to prioritize things that are urgent and unimportant due to lack of proper planning. Important but not urgent things, like exercise, are usually the last to get attended to.

Maybe you are not yet alarmed enough to think you need to work out because you know you are still okay. But why wait for the time when you've gotten fat and you've developed health problems?

Urgent and important things like exercising to live longer and to prevent coronary heart disease, hypertension as well as low back problems should be given time.

Whatever schedule you have right now, think of how you can incorporate movement to your daily routine. If you start to plan as early as now, exercise will be manageable.

If you think exercise only involves going to the gym and you are a busy mother, well, change your mind-set. Playing with kids and doing household chores are considered physical activities.

Go for enjoyable activities that you are capable of doing.

A study published in Medicine and Science in Sports showed that most people engaged in long-term physical activity because they found a sense of fun or happiness.

The enjoyment of physical activity was explained in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology. When you are competent enough to perform a physical activity, enjoyment and satisfaction can be experienced. When your skills are inadequate for the challenges of an activity, anxiety occurs, but when your skills are greater than the challenges, boredom takes place.

Failure to start exercise programs may stem from your perception that you are not fit enough or you are too old to do it, without even trying.

Explore activities that will suit your age, body type, fitness level and interest. If you belong to the senior group, choose safer exercise alternatives like yoga, core training and light weight training. To maintain interest over time, increase the level of difficulty when improvements are achieved.

E-mail the author at mitchfelipe@gmail.com

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What are the emergency measures to take in case of firecracker injury?

Treat and monitor the victim's ABC and D's (Airway, Breathing, Circulation and Defibrillation). Always expect breathing problems if the victim's burns are to the face or if the victim has been exposed to hot gases or smoke. Control the bleeding and remove all jewelry from the burned area as swelling may develop rapidly. Apply cool water to the affected area or submerge in cool water (do not use ice or ice water) and remove clothing gently from the affected area but don't remove clothes that are sticking to the skin. Cover the area with dry, sterile dressings; if large areas are affected cover it with clean & dry sheets. Do not break blisters or apply ointments. Treat for shock and most important is to bring the patient to the nearest emergency room for anti-tetanus propylaxis.

Dr. Albert Cesar Faller Jr. provides us with this week's discussion on the emergency management of Firecracker injuries. Dr. Jun, as he is commonly addressed by his patients, had his training for Sports Medicine at the University of Cincinnati and he also went to Seoul National University Bundang Hospital in Seoul, Korea for his training in Shoulder Arthroscopy. He is a fellow of the Philippine Orthopaedic Association, a diplomate of The Philippine Board of Orthopaedic and a member of the Philippine Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine. Dr. Jun spends his free time with his family or playing golf every weekends. MEDICard members may avail for his consultations at Lipa Medix Medical Center every Tuesday and Friday 1-5pm and every Monday and Saturday 9-12 noon at Daniel Mercado Medical Center.

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

MEDICard PHILIPPINES, INC.: 9th floor Sagittarius Building H.V dela Costa Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City 1227 Trunkline: 88-4-[illegible] Fax No.: 894-6720; 810-3856 Text: Key in MEDICARD and send to 2327 Globe subscribers and (0917) 890-2327 for non-Globe subscribers. E-mail: inquiry@medicardphils.com Website: www.medicardphils.com

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The Dermatology Center is part of St. Luke's three centers of excellence. The AWSM Centers of Excellence advance a multidisciplinary approach to enhance total well-being inside out. AWSM stands for aesthetic, weight and skin management.

The three centers are dermatology, aesthetic surgery, and obesity and weight management, located at 12/F, Cathedral Heights Building Complex, St. Luke's Medical Center; 7230101/0301.

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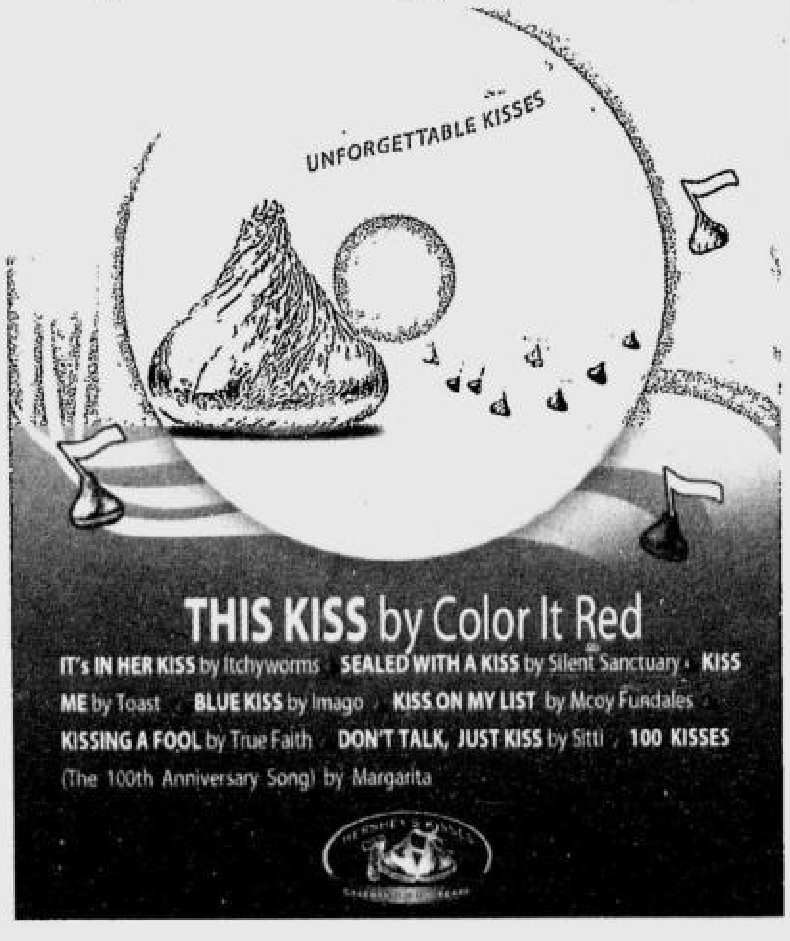

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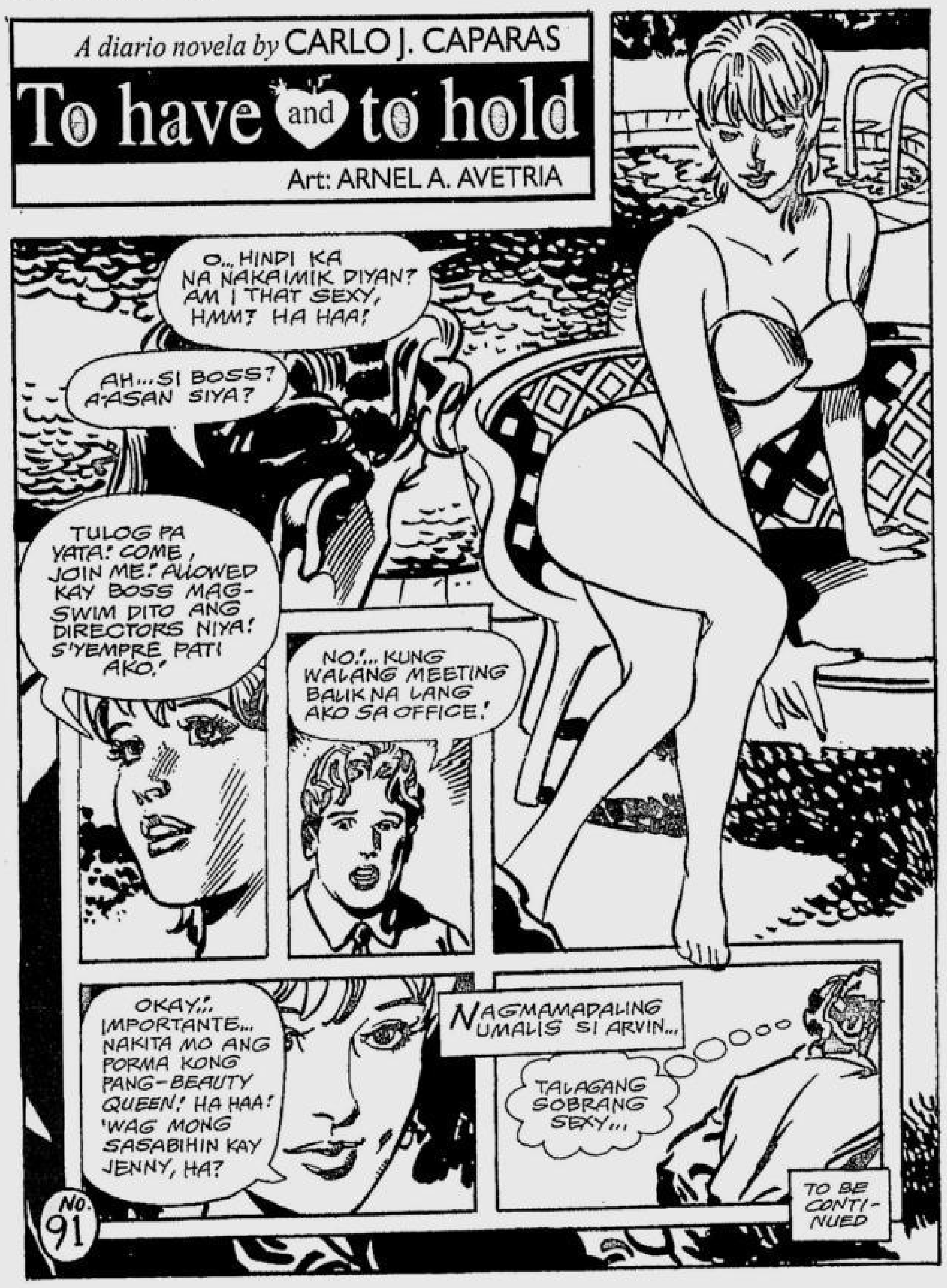
A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

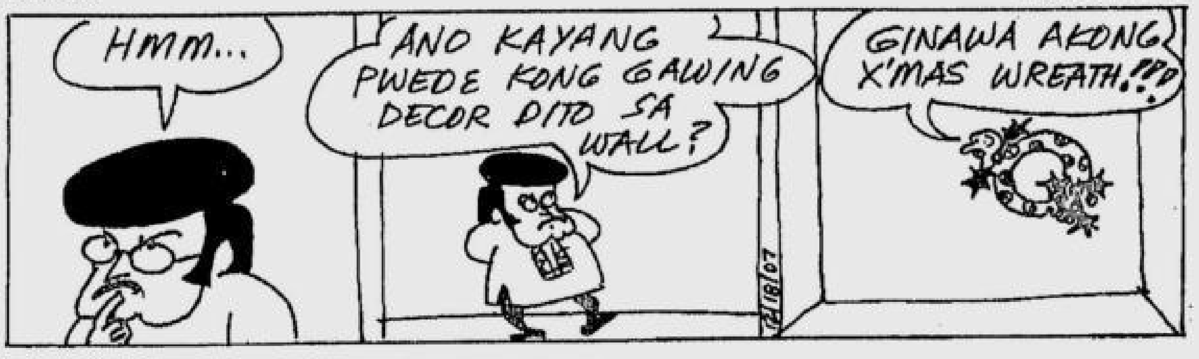
To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA


O.. HINDI KA NA NAKAIMIK DIYAN? AM I THAT SEXY, HMM? HA HAA!
AH...SI BOSS? A'ASAN SIYA?
TULOG PA YATA! COME, JOIN ME! ALLOWED KAY BOSS MAG-SWIM DITO ANG DIRECTORS NIYA! S'YEMPRE PATI AKO!
NO!... KUNG WALANG MEETING BALIK NA LANG AKO SA OFFICE!
OKAY!.. IMPORTANTE... NAKITA MO ANG PORMA KONG PANG-BEAUTY QUEEN! HA HAA! 'WAG MONG SASABIHIN KAY JENNY, HA?
NAGMAMADALING UMALIS SI ARVIN...
TALAGANG SOBRANG SEXY...
TO BE CONTINUED
NO. 91

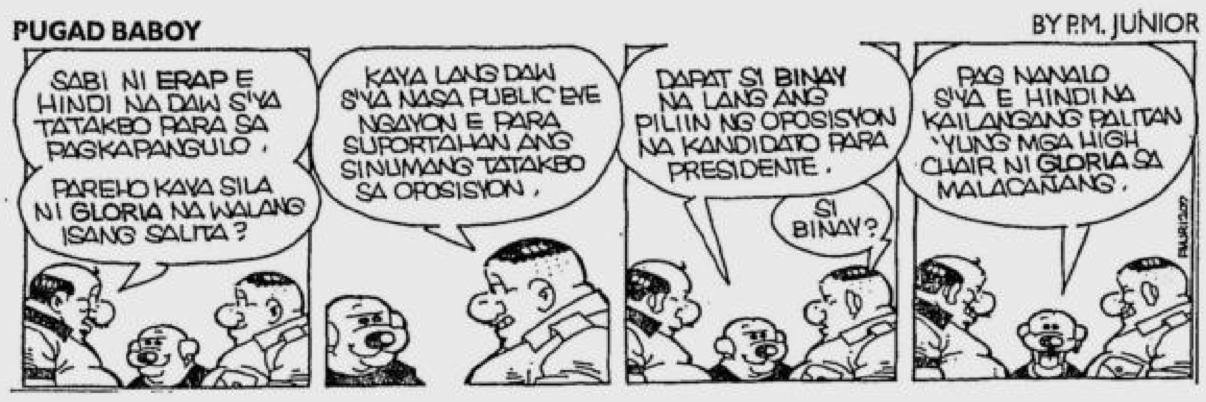
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


HMM...
ANO KAYANG PWEDE KONG GAWING DECOR DITO SA WALL?
GINAWA AKONG X'MAS WREATH!!?
12/18/07

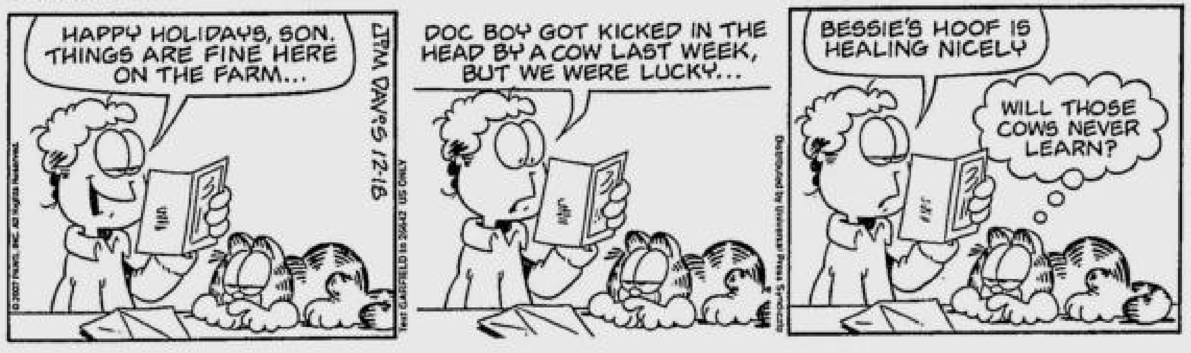
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


SABI NI ERAP E HINDI NA DAW S'YA TATAKBO PARA SA PAGKAPANGULO.
PAREHO KAYA SILA NI GLORIA NA WALANG ISANG SALITA?
KAYA LANG DAW S'YA NASA PUBLIC EYE NGAYON E PARA SUPORTAHAN ANG SINUMANG TATAKBO SA OPOSISYON.
DAPAT SI BINAY NA LANG ANG PILIIN NG OPOSISYON NA KANDIDATO PARA PRESIDENTE.
SI BINAY?
PAG NANALO SIYA E HINDI NA KAILANGANG PALITAN 'YUNG MGA HIGH CHAIR NI GLORIA SA MALACAÑANG.

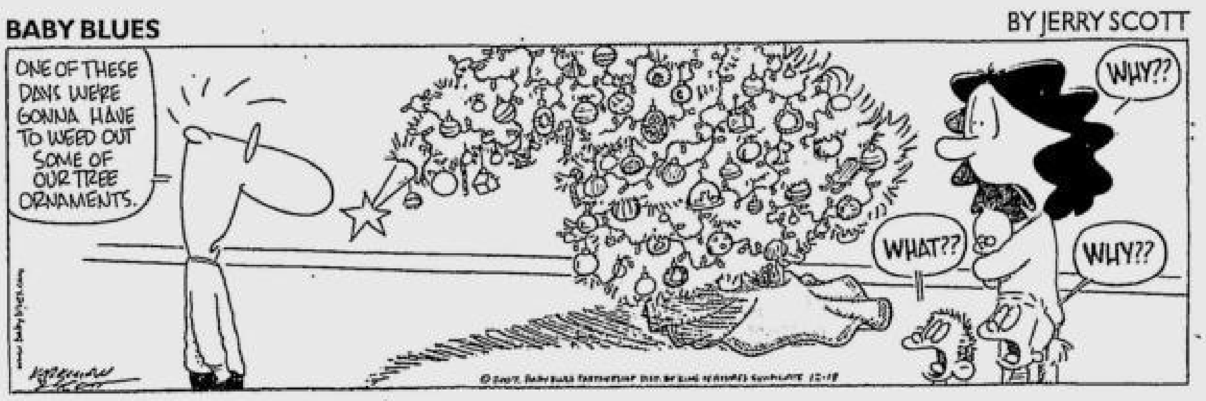
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


HAPPY HOLIDAYS, SON. THINGS ARE FINE HERE ON THE FARM...
JIM DAVIS 12-18
DOC BOY GOT KICKED IN THE HEAD BY A COW LAST WEEK, BUT WE WERE LUCKY...
BESSIE'S HOOF IS HEALING NICELY
WILL THOSE COWS NEVER LEARN?

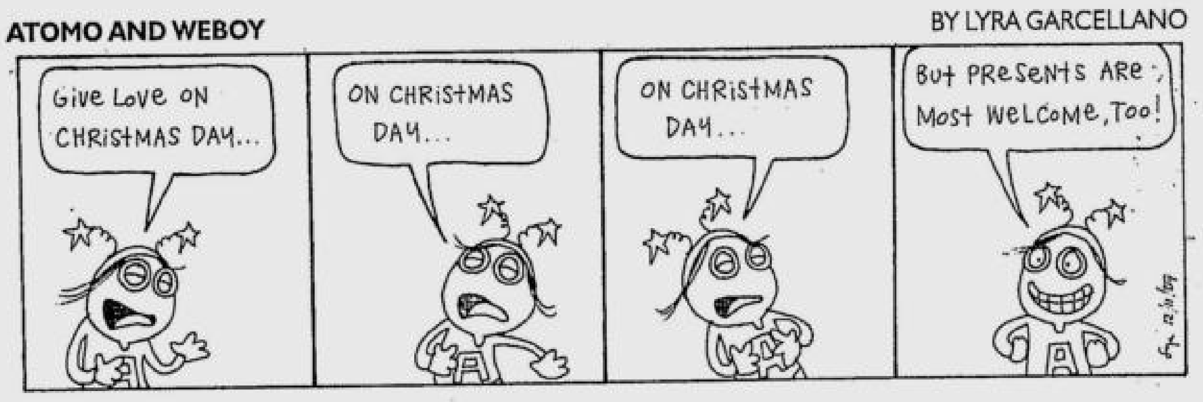
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ONE OF THESE DAYS WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO WEED OUT SOME OF OUR TREE ORNAMENTS.
WHY??
WHAT??
WHY??

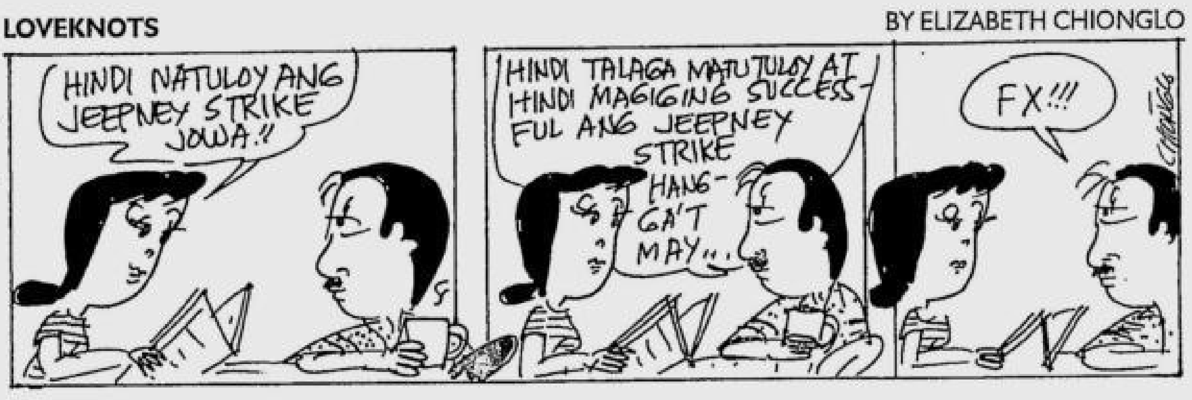
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Give Love ON CHRISTMAS DAY...
ON CHRISTMAS DAY...
ON CHRISTMAS DAY...
But PResents Are Most Welcome, Too!

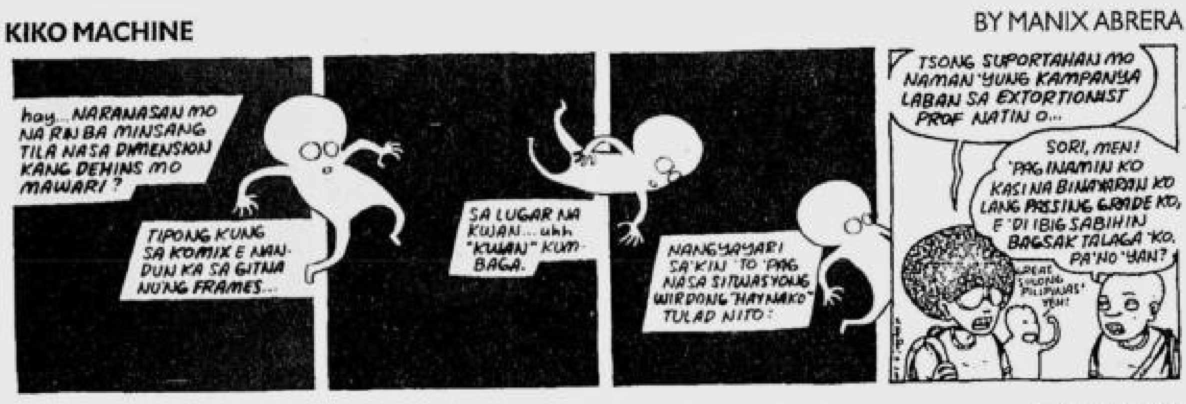
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HINDI NATULOY ANG JEEPNEY STRIKE JOWA.!!
HINDI TALAGA MATUTULOY AT HINDI MAGIGING SUCCESSFUL ANG JEEPNEY STRIKE
HANGGA'T MAY...
FX!!!
CHIONGLO

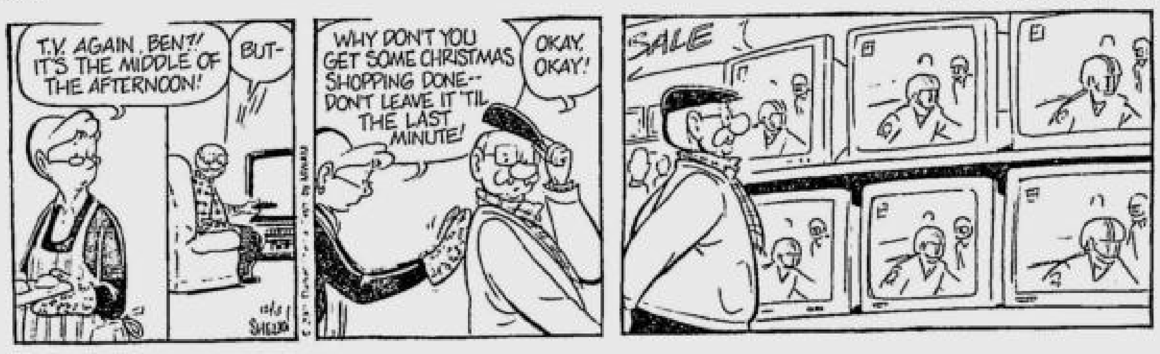
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA

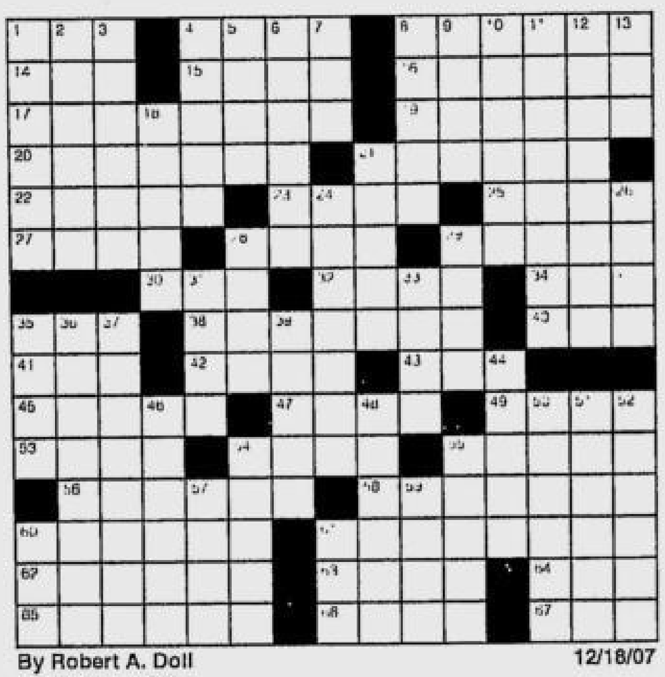

hay... NARANASAN MO NA BA MINSANG TILA NASA DIMENSION KANG DEHINS MO MAWARI?
TIPONG KUNG SA KOMIX E NANDUN KA SA GITNA NUNG FRAMES...
SA LUGAR NA KWAN... uhh "KWAN" KUMBAGA.
NANGYAYARI SA'KIN 'TO 'PAG NASA SITWASYONG WIRDONG "HAYNAKO" TULAD NITO:
TSONG SUPORTAHAN MO NAMAN 'YUNG KAMPANYA LABAN SA EXTORTIONIST PROF NATIN O...
SORI, MEN! 'PAG INAMIN KO KASI NA BINAYARAN KO LANG PASSING GRADE KO, E 'DI IBIG SABIHIN BAGSAK TALAGA 'KO. PA'NO 'YAN?

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


T.V. AGAIN, BEN?! IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE AFTERNOON!
BUT-
WHY DON'T YOU GET SOME CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DONE-- DON'T LEAVE IT 'TIL THE LAST MINUTE!
OKAY. OKAY!
SALE

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Robert A. Doll
Hattiesburg, MS

12/18/07

ACROSS

1 Twitch
4 Male sibs
8 Laconian city
14 In the past
15 Volcanic flow
16 Director Ron
17 Band member off the wagon?
19 Visions
20 Japanese warrior
21 Magnate's purview
22 Amalgamate
23 Woad and anil
25 Statuesque
27 Fill completely
28 Romanov title
29 Computer code
30 Homer's exclamation
32 Streamlet
34 Compass dir.
35 Besmirch
38 Bad toupee bargain for narcotics?
40 Comic Skelton
41 Greek letter
42 Mild Dutch cheese
43 Training room
45 Large fishing hooks
47 French seas
49 Formerly, formerly
53 Countertenor
54 Nota _ _ (note well)
55 Aver
56 Slacks off
58 More austere
60 Lack of vigor
61 Card game for strippers?
62 Some Dutch genre paintings
63 Landed
64 J. Lynne's rock group
65 Really working
66 Sicilian volcano
67 German article

DOWN

1 Birthplace of St. Paul
2 Tropical lizard
3 Choose a side
4 Trumpet blast
5 Indian prince
6 Humpty-Dumpty's kin
7 Patriotic men's org.
8 Wedges
9 Stately display
10 Watches for
11 Heckle a driver?
12 Edge of the tundra
13 Circulars
18 Toned down
21 Ghostly
24 Some railroad employees
26 Told a whopper
28 Heavy sound
29 Accomplice
31 Raw minerals
33 Falls behind
35 Bucks' leader?
36 Loser to Hippomenes
37 Heyerdahl's favorite potable?
39 Competitive activities
44 D.C. subway
46 Frothed
48 Season again
50 Positioned in order
51 Co-founder of "The Tatler"
52 Intense fear
54 Monster
55 Nasal partitions
57 Turner or Louise
59 Romulus or Remus
60 Gray shade
61 "Norma __"

Monday's Puzzle Solved

S	E	R	B	■	A	T	O	M	■	T	E	S	T	S
H	A	U	L	■	N	A	P	A	■	H	A	N	O	I
I	S	H	O	T	T	H	E	S	H	E	R	I	F	F
M	E	R	G	E	■	I	N	T	E	R	■	P	U	T
■	■	■	S	M	A	T	T	E	R	E	D	■	■	■
O	C	T	■	P	R	I	O	R	■	M	U	S	T	Y
T	R	I	O	■	G	A	P	■	B	I	S	T	R	O
H	A	N	D	G	U	N	■	C	O	N	T	R	O	L
E	N	C	O	R	E	■	P	A	R	■	S	I	L	K
R	E	T	R	O	■	H	A	D	O	N	■	P	L	Y
■	■	■	S	O	N	A	T	I	N	A	S	■	■	■
F	A	D	■	V	O	W	E	L	■	T	E	P	E	E
A	F	A	H	E	W	E	L	L	T	O	A	R	M	S
C	A	T	E	R	■	S	L	A	W	■	R	O	M	P
T	R	E	S	S	■	T	A	C	O	■	S	W	A	Y

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12/18/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: Once you have a big idea, you never let it go. You're amazingly persistent and resilient. That's why you're not afraid to tackle big projects. You have vision. Because of this, others sometimes think you're in your own world. (And perhaps you are.) You have high ideals and a wonderful imagination. Work hard to build or construct something important this year.

Birthdate of: Brad Pitt, actor; Katie Holmes, actress; Steven Spielberg, director.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Today lucky Jupiter begins to move slowly across the top of your chart for the rest of the year. This brings you wonderful career opportunities and good fortune in general. Lucky you!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): In the year ahead, travel and education opportunities will come your way. Many will make great strides in publishing, the media, medicine and the law. Work-related travel is also likely.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Inheritances, gifts and goodies can come your way this year. Somehow you'll definitely benefit from the wealth of others (for the entire year)!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Partnerships and close relationships will become joyful and mutually rewarding. Enjoy your friends and partners in this coming year. It's easier to be happy now.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Your job is going to improve so much in the next 12 months, it's laughable. Your evil boss will move or get fired. If your job doesn't improve, you'll get a better one.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Plan for a vacation in the next 12 months. Some of you expand your families. Love, romance, sports and fun times are yours for the coming year. Whoopee!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): The next 12-18 months are excellent for real estate deals. Now is the time to improve or expand your home. Family relations will be happy and joyful as well.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your entire outlook on life is becoming happier and more optimistic. This upbeat attitude will continue for the next year. Wonderful!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You'll definitely earn more money in the next 12-18 months. You can boost your earnings as well as come up with wonderful money-making ideas. Ka-ching!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Today, for the first time in 12 years, lucky Jupiter moves into your sign, where it will stay for a year. This brings you all kinds of opportunities and good fortune. Yeehaw! (It's your lucky year ahead.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): In the coming year, important events will take place that deepen and enrich your inner world. You'll understand life better. You'll learn to be more compassionate.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): What a popular year ahead! Friends, groups, clubs and organizations all want to see your face. New friends definitely will come into your life.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu

By Dave Green

						1		
			1	8	9	4		
				7			5	3
	5			3	1		9	
	9	1	2		4	8	7	
	4		5	9			1	
2	8			1				
		9	7	5	6			
		4						

Difficulty Level ★★

12/18

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	1	5	3	4	8	2	7	9
8	7	2	6	9	1	5	3	4
3	4	9	7	5	2	1	6	8
5	9	8	2	3	4	6	1	7
1	6	7	5	8	9	3	4	2
2	3	4	1	7	6	8	9	5
7	5	1	4	2	3	9	8	6
4	8	6	9	1	5	7	2	3
9	2	3	8	6	7	4	5	1

Difficulty Level ★

12/17

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime Licauco

The power of positive affirmation

Part III

THIS STORY WAS told to me by the wife of the man involved.

Jose was a lowly clerk in a government agency in Quezon City. His salary was barely enough to support his wife, but Jose was consumed by a desire to own a Canon SLR 35mm still camera with a zoom.

Its cost was way beyond his meager income. Digital cameras were not yet in vogue at that time.

So he contented himself by looking at the Canon camera in a store near his office. Every day, after office hours, he would go to that shop and just stare at the camera displayed there.

He imagined owning the camera and using it with delight. Every day he never failed to stop by the shop just to look at the camera of his dream. He would just stand in front of the glass display case for a few minutes and leave quietly.

I cannot recall how many weeks he did that routine.

A surprise

Then, one evening, a cousin who had just arrived from Saudi Arabia where he was an overseas Filipino worker telephoned.

"*Pinsan!*" the cousin exclaimed. "I bought you something from Saudi. I hope you like it."

"What is it?" Jose eagerly asked.

"Well, I bought a camera for you."

"What kind of camera?"

"It's a Canon SLR 35mm camera with a zoom!"

Jose almost fainted. He never told his cousin he had been dreaming of such a camera for a long time but could not afford it. His strong desire, affirmation, visualization and intention to own that camera became a reality in no time at all!

Professional gamblers, as well as successful businessmen, are very much aware of the power of positive affirmation or suggestion. When betting on a number or launching a new project they do not let a negative thought enter their minds. They believe it is bad luck to think of negative things.

We Filipinos have an intuitive knowledge of the power of thought. If somebody during a trip says, "Be careful or we may have an accident," another is likely to exclaim, "Don't say that. It might come true!"

Scientific proof

Scientific studies conducted in the west proved the power of intention or positive affirmation. It has been scientifically shown for example that intention can retard the hatching of a fruit fly's larvae and affect the alkalinity of water.

A Japanese researcher named Masaru Emoto of Yokohama has shown, after years of meticulous experiments, that one's intention and emotion can affect the molecular structure of water crystals.

He cursed a container of water and froze it. Under a microscope, he saw the water crystals scattered and in disarray. When he expressed loving thoughts before the water, the molecular structure became harmonious and beautiful.

The experiment was repeated over a long period of time using different emotions. Sometimes, a piece of paper with words written on it was left on the water. The results were similar. It seems there is an innate intelligence in water and in nature in general.

In my Inner Mind Development Institute, I have the following motto: "The mind knows no limits aside from those it accepts."

This is another way of stating the Law of Affirmation or Intention. We are the ones that put limits to what we can do or accomplish. Remove the mental limitations and we can accomplish anything we want.

"This world," as Buddhist masters have been telling us, "is largely our own mental creation." We create our own reality. We are, in a very real and literal sense, co-creators with God.

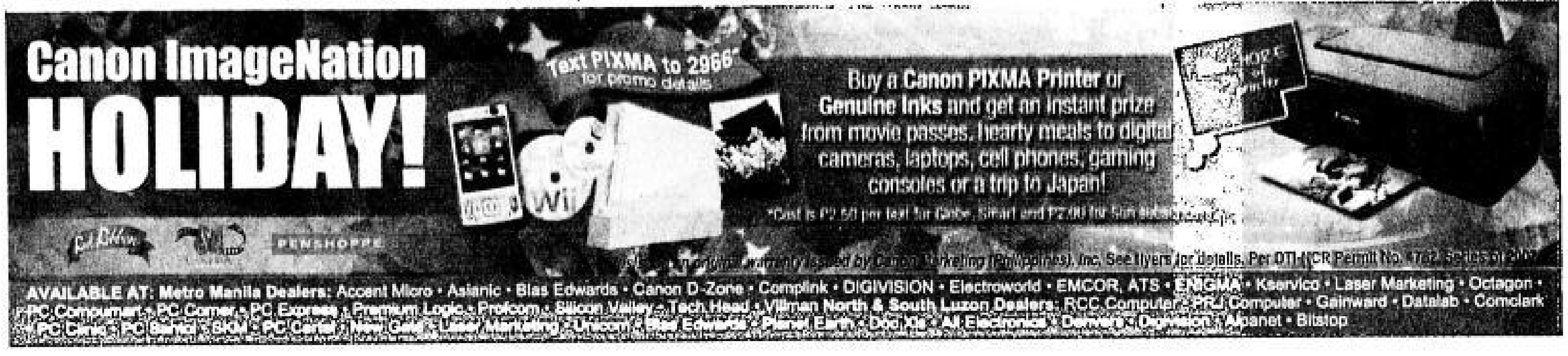
Ancient mystics of the East have been saying this for thousands of years. And now modern western particle physicists are saying the same thing.

It is because of the tremendous power of the human mind that the Bible forbids us to curse anyone, because a curse can result in real physical injury or harm to others.

A curse is similar to a spell inflicted on a victim. It brings serious karmic consequences to the perpetrator. That is why we are forbidden to curse anyone. If we do this, we suffer somehow a karmic debt for which we have to pay later in life.

I have received letters from readers telling me that whenever they wished for something, they always got it. They wondered why that was so. That is due to the operation of the Law of Affirmation or Suggestion, one of the secret laws of nature.

PIXMA
PHOTO PERFECTION FOR LIFE
Canon
Delighting You Always



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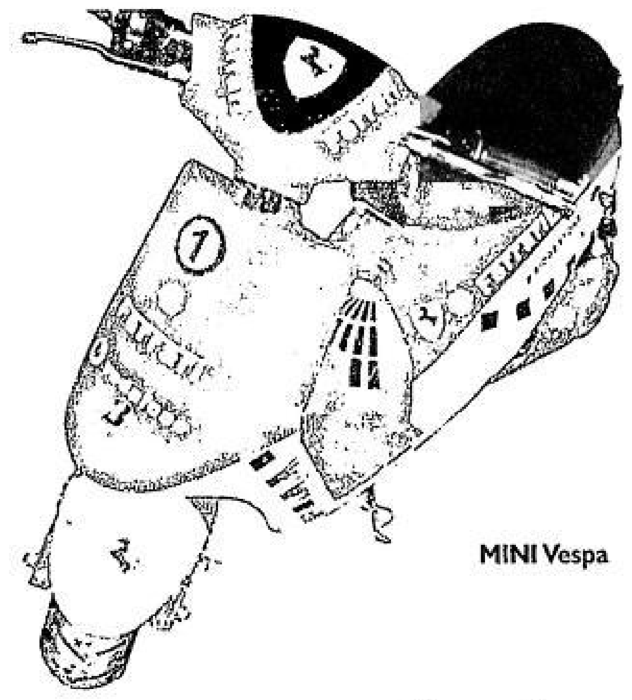


MINI Vespa

Christmas gift ideas

IF YOU ARE STILL LOOKING for a Christmas gift for someone who likes speed and excitement even in the safety of their neighborhood, Toby's Sports suggests the Bismarketech Pocket Bike.

It features a 49cc, air-cooled, single cylinder engine that packs a lot of power. The compact bike has a one-liter tank capacity and capable of carrying as much as 300 pounds of load. It has a disk braking system and 11-inch tires.

Toby's Sports also has gift suggestions for people who enjoy the outdoors.

For people who get a thrill shooting the rapids, Toby's Sports offers the "Feel Free Kayak Move." The single-seater, sit-on-top kayak, features a comfortable low-back seat with gear pocket for comfort while going down the rapids.

Its innovative, molded-in handle ensures a good grip all the time, while chines offer stability and safety.

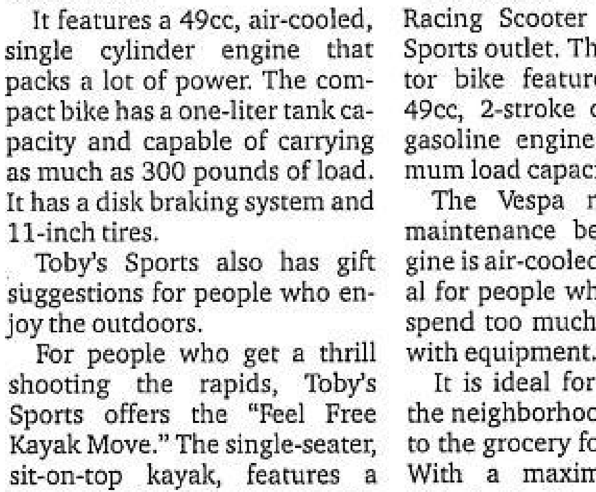
The kayak features a self-draining cockpit with plug and a drink holder.

Toby's Sports suggest a Mini Vespa for kids this Christmas.

Check out the Mini Vespa Racing Scooter at any Toby's Sports outlet. The compact motor bike features a powerful 49cc, 2-stroke cylinder, single gasoline engine with a maximum load capacity of 85 kilos.

The Vespa needs minimal maintenance because the engine is air-cooled, making it ideal for people who prefer not to spend too much time tinkering with equipment.

It is ideal for racing around the neighborhood or quick runs to the grocery for little errands. With a maximum speed of 50 kph, the Vespa is fast enough to indulge a young person's need for speed. Front and rear disk brakes give it the right braking power for safety. Visit www.tobys.com.



BISMARKETECH
Pocket Bike

Christmas spa package

HERE'S A PERFECT GOOD-grooming break for you and your loved ones—Deverana's Champagne de Christmas Package.

The main ingredient is fresh white grapes, used in making champagne. Rich in antioxidants, white grapes help protect the skin from free radicals and the environments' ill effects. At the same time, it removes dead surface skin cells to reveal fresh, healthy new skin cells while the fragrance and warm scents of Christmastime, spice and citrus put you in the best holiday mood.

Then bask in the totally relaxing 90-minute body massage using an exclusive oil blend, inspired by Christmas pine tree and the traditional Christmas pudding, making muscle aches and worries simply disappear. At the end of the treatment, you'll feel great and younger-looking.

Devarana Spas' Champagne De Christmas Package is P6,000+ per person, available until Dec. 31.

Devarana Spa is at 2/F, Dusit Hotel Nikko. Call 8673333 or 8187081.

HONG KONG WINTERFEST
Dazzling Nights + Non-Stop Parties – HK is On!

This year, Hong Kong's famed WinterFest (30/11/2007 - 1/1/2008) has organized a series of fabulous programmes for you. You'll be spoiled for choice with spectacular animated illuminations that cover the skyscrapers on both sides of Victoria Harbour. The streets and malls are dressed up in dazzling decorations and there are fabulous celebrations and surprise performances by troupes of entertainers. Enjoy mega-savings shopping sales plus dining treats and the stupendous *A Symphony of Lights - New Year Countdown* to welcome the New Year of 2008.

Discover happy, sparkling parties at WinterFest. Come with your friends to celebrate a glittering winter getaway.

Check out more programme highlights at **DiscoverHongKong.com.**

HONG KONG LIVE IT. LOVE IT!
HONG KONG
HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD

THE KING and the Prince of the Nightlife—PR whiz GP Reyes and Nuvo's Louie Ysmael—are behind Embassy's new VIP superclub.

VICKY Zayco, Thomas Zayco, Ria Lopez and Liz Aguirre

CAT Arambulo, Kat Cruz, Stephen Ku and Ian King

ASLIE Aslanan and Jenni Epperson

MAY Muñoz and Miguel Rosales

RANDY Oliva of BusinessWorld, Tito Hermoso and James Deakin of C!, Ira Panganiban of dzXL, and Danny Ocampo and Efren Borja of BusinessWorld

BOYET Lim, Toyota Davao president

JEFFREY Abacan, TMP board member; Jun Ikeda of Mitsui & Company Ltd.; and Hiroyuki Tsuda, TMP vice president

METROBANK'S first couple, president Arthur Ty and wife Sandra

LEO Ferreria, Toyota Cubao president, and Eduardo Tan, Toyota Cabanatuan president

A revolution is afoot

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** using **Kodak** EasyShare system

EVERYBODY KNOWS THE legendary **Louie Ysmael**, *palanggas*, the undisputed king of the nightlife and who was behind some of the most successful and iconic nightspots in the country. He is the man that paved the way for Cosmo Manille's vibrant club and bar scene.

Sharing this love for the nightlife, dahlings, is none other than advertising, events and PR dynamo, cyber-smart mover and shaker **GP Reyes**, no less.

The young man behind some of Metro's hottest events, parties, advertising and PR campaigns, GP is also one of the forces behind the success of Embassy Superclub. He is co-owner of that hip new Boracay hotel, the Tides.

Well, this year, Louie and GP, decided to join forces by throwing the first awesome party at the cavernous and luxurious all-new chic superclub Embassy. And, wow, what a party it turned out to be!

Our town's hotshot luminaries and social-scene heavyweights, stylish scenesters and the beautiful were all accounted for at the strictly by-invitation-only bash, with booze—Grey Goose, Bacardi and Bombay Sapphire—endlessly flowing.

Yes, it was truly an unforgettable night, a sign of things to come for Louie and GP who, together with **Erik Cua** and the other hotshot Embassy partners, are setting up Members Only, an ultra-exclusive membership club on the first floor of the new Embassy.

The new club will have gorgeous luxe and elegant interiors, VIP access to the superclub. It will be the ultimate in privacy and exclusivity, and will definitely revolutionize our town's night life, *palanggas*, when it opens its door in the first quarter of 2008.

For more info on Members Only, do e-mail gpeoplemail@gmail.com.

500K milestone

Five hundred thousand is an awesome number, *palanggas*. But that is how many Toyota vehicles have been sold since 1989. Toyota Motor Philippines (TMP) celebrated the milestone at One Esplanade.

During the event, Toyota's two new gorgeous babies, the all-new Vios and Land Cruiser, were displayed, a treat to all the invitees that, *naturellement*, included tons of wealthy big boys who can't do without their big toys.

Aprés an hour or so of socializing and chatting mostly about car, *natch*, the program started with an awesome Cirque du Soleil-ish opening number. The performance was both haunting and beautiful, and everyone was awed.

TMP's hotshot vice chair, **Alfred Ty**, and president **Hiroshi Ito** were called to speak by **Vince Socco**, senior vice president of Toyota Motor Asia-Pacific. Both gentlemen spoke about the significance of the event, citing "the unique processes and global standards that have made and continued to make Toyota a household automotive name across the globe."

Incidentally, dahlings, TMP is the first automotive company in the country to sell 500,000 units. Not bad, huh?

Vince S. congratulated Ty and Ito and TMP's dealers "for this amazing accomplishment" and presented them with a special token, *palanggas*.

For a breather, dynamic husband-and-wife duo **Robert Seña** and **Isay Alvarez** performed popular standard numbers. Proud and happy over the smashingly successful event was **Kenji Nakashima**, executive vice president of TMP, who delivered a *trés* moving speech, *aprés* which he led the toast with the bubbly, dahlings.

Everyone then hit the dance floor and wiggled their hips to the rhythmic sounds of the samba band Guarana.

Absolutely a dazzling event, dahlings.

5th anniversary

The world-renowned MasterCard joined Urban Spa when it marked its fifth anniversary with a "Spahh-rific" celebration, no less, *palanggas*.

Urban Spa's **Tessa Prieto-Valdes** and **Irene Ibañez** hosted the affair and welcomed the tons of invitees. Bankard's **Oscar Biason** and Banco de Oro's **Myla Untalan** with husband **John Victor** and kids **Juancho** and **Julio**, were among the fun, fun personas who attended.

Highlight of the exciting bash was the launch of MasterCard's promotion for its premium (Platinum and Titanium) cardholders at Urban Spa. Eligible cardholders have tons of chances to enjoy totally their Mastercard.

There was a fun fashion show with cute models from Bench Kids and Blissful Babes and a cool mom and kid photo exhibit by Picture Company.

Now you know why it was a "Spahh-rific" celebration. Urban Spa promised more priceless moments of relaxation for premium MasterCard holders. Check it out, *palanggas*.

NUVO'S Gang of 3. Louie Y with his angels Cacay Moras and Liza Tan

PEPPER Teehankee, Ruffa Gutierrez and Donita Rose

RCBC Bankard
URBAN

BANKARD'S Irene Taylo, Oscar Biason, Marlyn Angeles and Toy Gonzales

CHOCO Dayrit and son Enzo

CLOSE pals Leah Puyat and Angelette Calero

MASAYASU Nagai, Mitsui Phils. general manager; Antonio Abacan Jr., Metrobank chair; Hiroshi Ito, Toyota Motor Phils. Corp. president; Vince Socco, Toyota Motor Asia-Pacific senior vice president; and Alfred Ty, Toyota Motor Phils. Corp. vice chair

DODI Aguila, Urban Spa's Tessa Prieto-Valdes, Irene Ibañez and Thelma Aguila

BDO'S Myla Untalan and son Julio

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

Take charge of your health

Part 2

IT IS TIME FOR US ALL TO EXERCISE better control of our wellness. Here are a few nuggets of information to guide us.

Individual needs

When the food pyramid was designed to give people an idea of what good nutrition is, the advice was rather innovative—design your own.

Each person has different requirements depending on his/her lifestyle. Example: A stay-at-home mom would have her own unique needs different from that of an athlete, just as a student's requirements will not be like a corporate executive's.

Most people eat too little of the right kind of foods and too much of the wrong kind. While you may be at a loss about what to eat or drink, always remember anything that is overcooked has less nutrients. On the other hand, if it is green, leafy and raw, then it is packed with goodness.

People on the go are often guilty of the following:

1. Drinking less water.
2. Eating too much fatty foods.
3. Snacking on junk.
4. Skipping meals.
5. Overloading on sweets.

No-nonsense

If you are experiencing chronic fatigue, headaches, emotional ups and downs, these are signs that clearly point to a lifestyle not supportive of health.

Why not make no-nonsense part of your daily vocabulary? Each time you succumb to the temptation of excess, mentally insert the term into your subconscious and conscious mind. Your internal programming will then command your external reality.

Why wait?

Disease is defined as a gross imbalance of one's normal body functions. The result of the imbalance will be expressed in symptoms. It is a sign that something has gone and is going wrong.

But is there a pre-disease stage? The answer is yes. Through a simple blood test one can already read the signs. Example: Heart disease begins many years before its onset. But why wait to get sick?

Here are a few preventive tips:

1. Be choosy with your food. Insist on your own food preference. Do not just eat what is in front of you.
2. Crash diets are out. Carbohydrates, animal fats, sugar, alcohol in moderation are best.
3. Just move it. Exercise is paramount in health management.

Tasty treats

While a low-fat diet is popularly followed by the health-conscious, there is some good news. Fat makes food tasty. Thus, people on low-fat diets may find their food tasteless.

Fat is good in that it can satisfy physical hunger. Without fat, the brain continues to send signals to the body—"you're not full, therefore, eat more." Balance your fat. You can indulge without overeating.

Shine

You shine with a whole variety of vegetable juices. Instead of carbonated drink, try to get into the habit of requesting for vegetable juice.

Power scrub

Mix ½ tbsp of virgin coco oil and ½ tbsp extra-virgin olive oil. Mix with 1 tbsp of pulverized raw rice grains. Rub gently all over your body (except eye area). Massage the oils into your skin. Leave on for five minutes. Your skin will become smooth as satin.

Affirm serenity

Inner peace begins with you. "I am serene now and forever."

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2007

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2008.)

Resiklo

Stars Bong Revilla, Dingdong Dantes, Jennylyn Mercado, Paolo Contis, Benjie Paras, TJ Trinidad, Roi Vinzon, Jolo Revilla, Bryan Revilla, Michelle Madrigal, Jairus Aquino, Ella Cruz, Bobby Andrews

Directed by Mark Reyes

In 2021, a resistance group of humans, led by former military officer Crisval (Revilla), defends a "recycled" sanctuary called *Paraiso* against aliens. Director Reyes says that "40 percent of the film is CGI (computer-generated imagery)." He asserts that he came up with the concept for this sci-fi flick "long before there was news about 'Transformers.'" Dave Hukom of Ignite insists that "the movie's robots are products of Pinoy ingenuity and resilience." Reyes recalls: "I made a 10-minute pitch tape and, after Sen. Bong saw it, he wanted to do it immediately." Says Hukom: "There are definitely more effects than 'Exodus' (Revilla's last MMFF movie)."

'Katas' gets an 'A' rating

By Marinel R. Cruz

MAVERICK FILMS' "KATAS NG SAUDI," about the plight of Filipino contract workers abroad, has received an "A" rating from the Cinema Evaluation Board for the "very effective," "exceptional" and "realistic" direction by filmmaker Joey Reyes.

"Katas" is one of nine entries to the 2007 Metro Manila Film Festival, which starts Dec. 25. An "A" means a 100 percent tax rebate.

"The film ... is a realistic portrayal of Filipino familial relationship," said CEB chair Christine Dayrit, quoting critics. "Joey's direction is exceptional, nothing out of sync."

The CEB board commended lead actor Jinggoy Estrada, saying he is "at his best" in this film. Lorna Tolentino, as the wife, gave an "admirably sensitive" performance.

Tax exemption

A board member said the script is a "revealing slice of life told with simplicity and truth" and that the dialogues are "insightful, sensitive, touching and realistic."

For a film to receive tax exemption, the producer submits an application addressed to the CEB chair and pays P20,000 for theater rental (plus P5,000 for a movie in digital format, with which to rent a digital projector.

The board members (a minimum of 11) vote by secret balloting on whether the movie should be tax-exempt.

"If the members decide to grant tax exemption, it would then deliberate on whether the film merits an "A" or a "B," explained Dayrit. "We have a formula for this: If a movie has competent effort in all criteria, it warrants a "B." Add to this originality in approach, and the film gets an "A."

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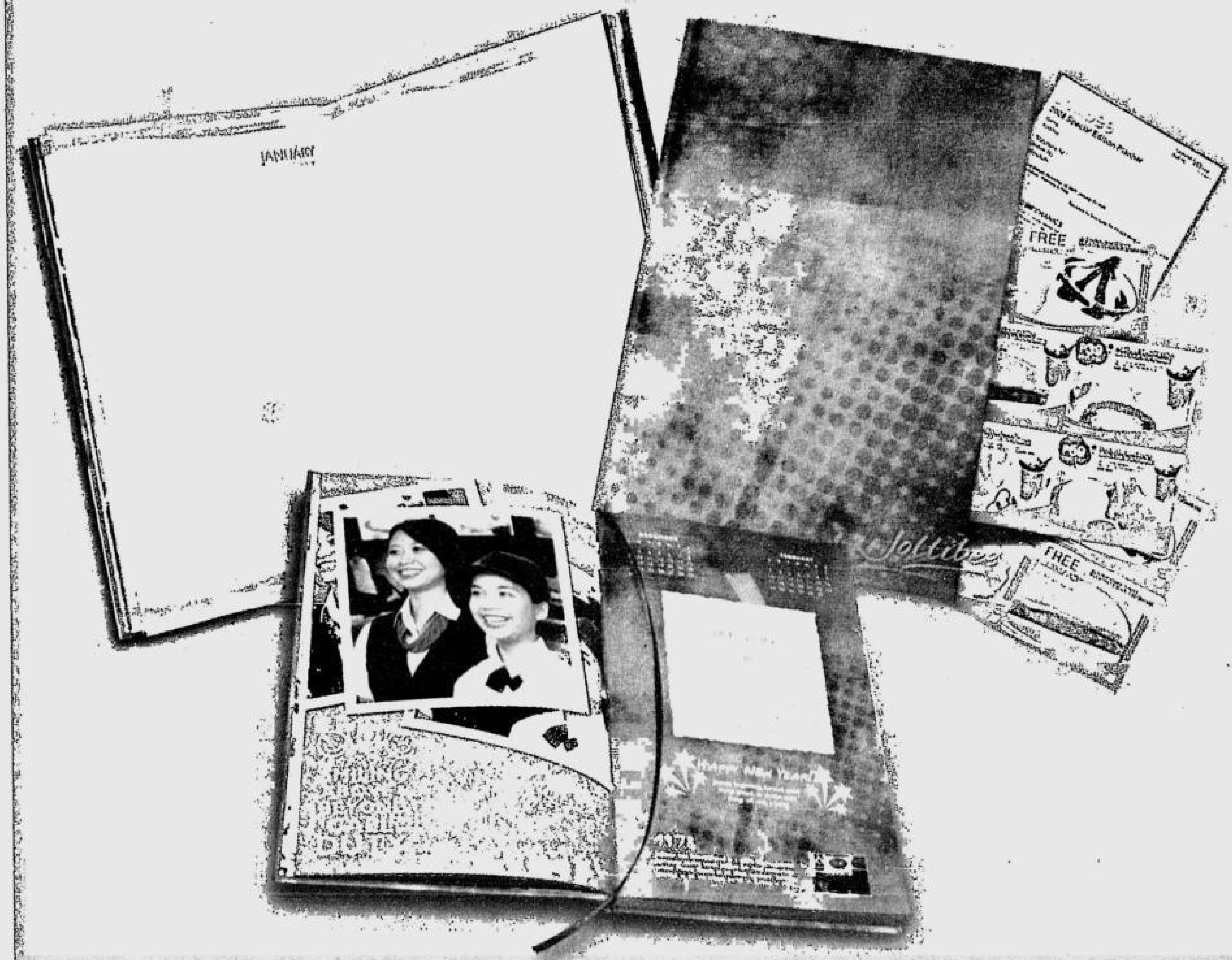

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2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
4 ENCHANTED / THE KINGDOM

PREMIERE
GRIND HOUSE : DEATH PROOF

Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
3 HOOD OF HORROR
4 THE KINGDOM

starmall EDSA SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266160

3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) HOOD OF HORROR
5

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 8433094

1 HOOD OF HORROR
2 BATANES
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
4 THE KINGDOM

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1 ENCHANTED
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 HITMAN

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
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THE GOLDEN COMPASS
BATANES

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
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1 BEOWULF
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF
4 ENCHANTED
5 CATACOMBS
6 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
7 THE KINGDOM
8 RESERVED
9 ONE MORE CHANCE
10 PASUKOB

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sta. Nino, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY) HOOD OF HORROR
2 (DOLBY) BATANES
3 (DOLBY) THE GOLDENT COMPASS
4 (DOLBY)

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334228

1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 THE GOLDENT COMPASS
5 HOOD OF HORROR

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 BATANES
2 HOOD OF HORROR
3 ENCHANTED
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1 THE KINGDOM
2 THE GOLDENT COMPASS
3 HOOD OF HORROR

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4440348)

1 HITMAN
2 THE GOLDENT COMPASS

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 THE GOLDENT COMPASS
2 BOOGEY MAN
3 THE KINGDOM
4 FRED CLAUS

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 BEOWULF
2 THE GOLDENT COMPASS

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72

1 ENCHANTED
2 THE GOLDENT COMPASS
3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
4 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1 30 DAYS OF NIGHT
2 HITMAN
3 THE GOLDENT COMPASS
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146

1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1 BEOWULF
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 30 DAYS OF NIGHT

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1 PASUKOB / LIONS FOR LAMBS
2 BOOGEYMAN
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
4 ENCHANTED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

1 BEOWULF
2 GAME PLAN
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 BEOWULF

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4746

1 BATANES
2 ONE MORE CHANCE

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 HOOD OF HORROR
2 KIKAY
3 BATANES
4 BEOWULF

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 GRACIA
3 HITMAN
4 BATANES
5 30 DAYS OF NIGHT

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 BATANES
2 HITMAN
3 GAME PLAN
4 BOOGEYMAN - 2

Berma Cinema
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1 PLEASE CALL
2

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GALLERIA

1 HITMAN • THX
1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30

2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

3 BEOWULF
12:40 3:00

4 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

5 CATACOMBS
1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

6 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

7 ENCHANTED
12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20 9:30

8 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
12:40 2:45 4:50 6:55 9:00

9 BATANES
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

10 HOOD of HORROR
1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9:50

ERMITA
Ticket Price: P110 / P120

1 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF
1:00 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00

2 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
12:50 2:40 4:30 6:20 8:10 10:00

3 BEOWULF 12:00 2:10 4:20
HITMAN 6:35 8:20 10:00

4 HOOD of HORROR
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

5 BATANES
12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8:05 10:00

6 ENCHANTED
12:40 2:55 5.10 7:25 9:40

7 PASUKOB
12:30 2:20 4:10 6:00 7:50 9:40

Midtown

1 CATACOMBS
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
11:35 1:40 3:45 5:50 7:55 10:00

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1 EASTERN PROMISES
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE
11:05 1:30 3:55 6:25 9:00

3 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF
11:50 2:10 4:30 6.50 9:10

4 BATANES
1.00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

5 HOOD of HORROR
12:30 2:40 4:50 7:00 9:10

6 ENCHANTED 12:30 2:30
BEOWULF 4:35 6:45 9:00

7 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05

8 CATACOMBS
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

NOVALICHES
Ticket Price: P90 / P100 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 PASUKOB
2 BATANES
3 HOOD of HORROR
4 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

PIONEER
Ticket Price: P100 / P110 [illegible]

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE
3 CATACOMBS
4 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF

STA. ROSA
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1 HITMAN
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 GAME PLAN
4 BATANES

LIPA
Ticket Price: P90 (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 GAME PLAN
2 BOOGEYMAN 2
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
4 HITMAN

DASMARINAS
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1 HOOD of HORROR
2 GHOST SON
3 BATANES
4 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

IMUS
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1 HOOD of HORROR
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3 GHOST SON
4 BATANES

ANGELES
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1 THE KINGDOM
2 FRED CLAUS
3 WE OWN THE NIGHT
4 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

TARLAC

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 LIONS FOR LAMBS
3 ENCHANTED

STARMILLS
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1 FRED CLAUS
2 BATANES
3 WE OWN THE NIGHT
4 BOOGEYMAN 2
5 THE KINGDOM
6 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

BACOLOD
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1 HITMAN
2 THE KINGDOM
3 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
4 MR. MAGORIUM's WONDER EMPORIUM
5 LUST CAUTION
6 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

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1 HITMAN
2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
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THE GOLDEN COMPASS PG13 2:20,4:50,7:20,9:50	ELIZABETH THE GOLDEN AGE PG13 1:00,3:30,6:00,8:30	THE GOLDEN COMPASS PG13 12:20,2:50,5:20, 7:50,10:20
THE KINGDOM R13 12:30,2:55,5:20, 7:45,10:10	DEATH PROOF R13 1:30,3:40,5:50,8:00	ELIZABETH THE GOLDEN AGE PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30

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SHANG CINEPLEX

① ELIZABETH
MTRCB PG-13
1:00, 3:50, 6:40, 9:30

② ELIZABETH
MTRCB PG-13
12.30, 3.20, 6.10, 9.00

③ GOLDEN COMPASS
MTRCB PG-13
1.30, 4.10, 6.50, 9.30

④ THE KINGDOM
MTRCB: GP 2:00, 9.30
DEATH PROOF
MTRCB R-13 4.40, 7:05

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2.00, 4.30, 7.00, 9.30

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6:00 , 8:20 , 10:35
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11:50 , 2:05 , 4:20
6:35 , 8:50
R-13

CINEMA 4 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
11:15 , 2:00 , 4:40
7:20 , 10:00
PG-13

CINEMA 5 ELIZABETH
11:15 , 2:10 , 5:00
7:50 , 10:35
PG - 13

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December 19 , 2007	Pilita Corales , Dulce , Malu Barry	8:30 PM
December 28 , 2007	Pooh	8:00 PM

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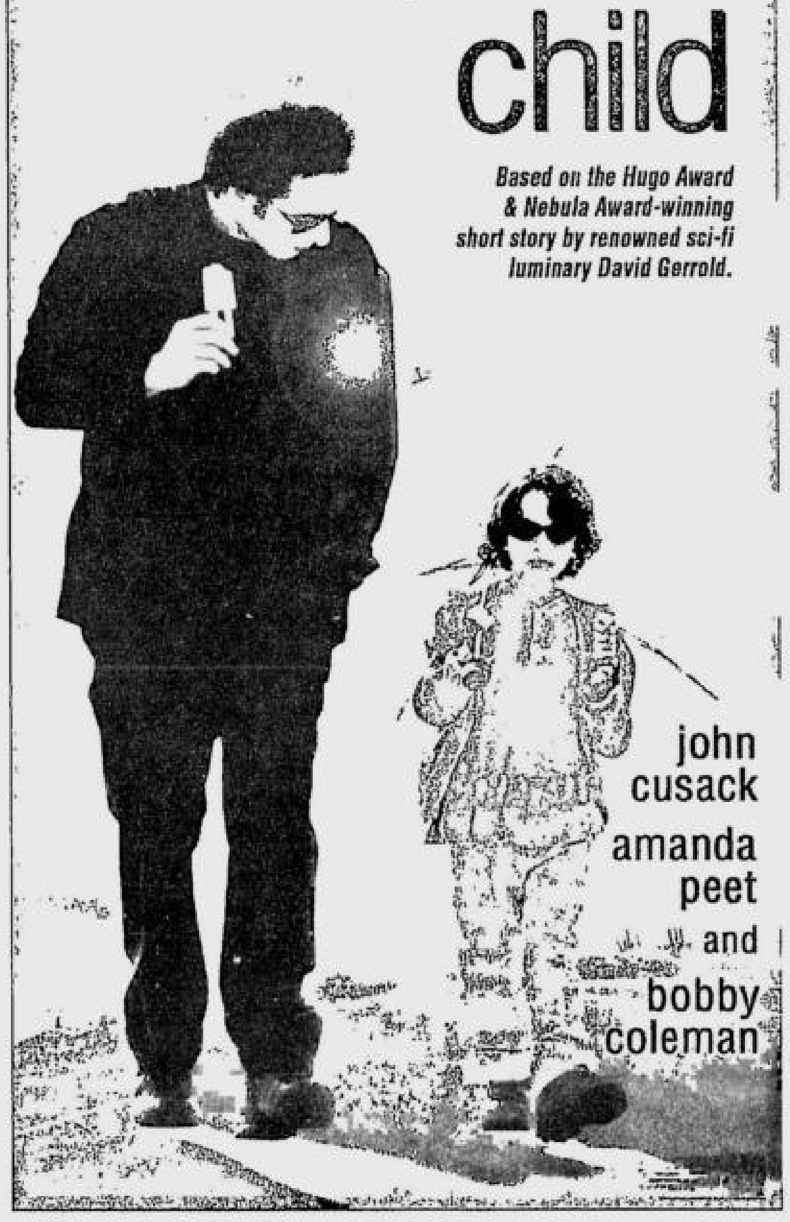

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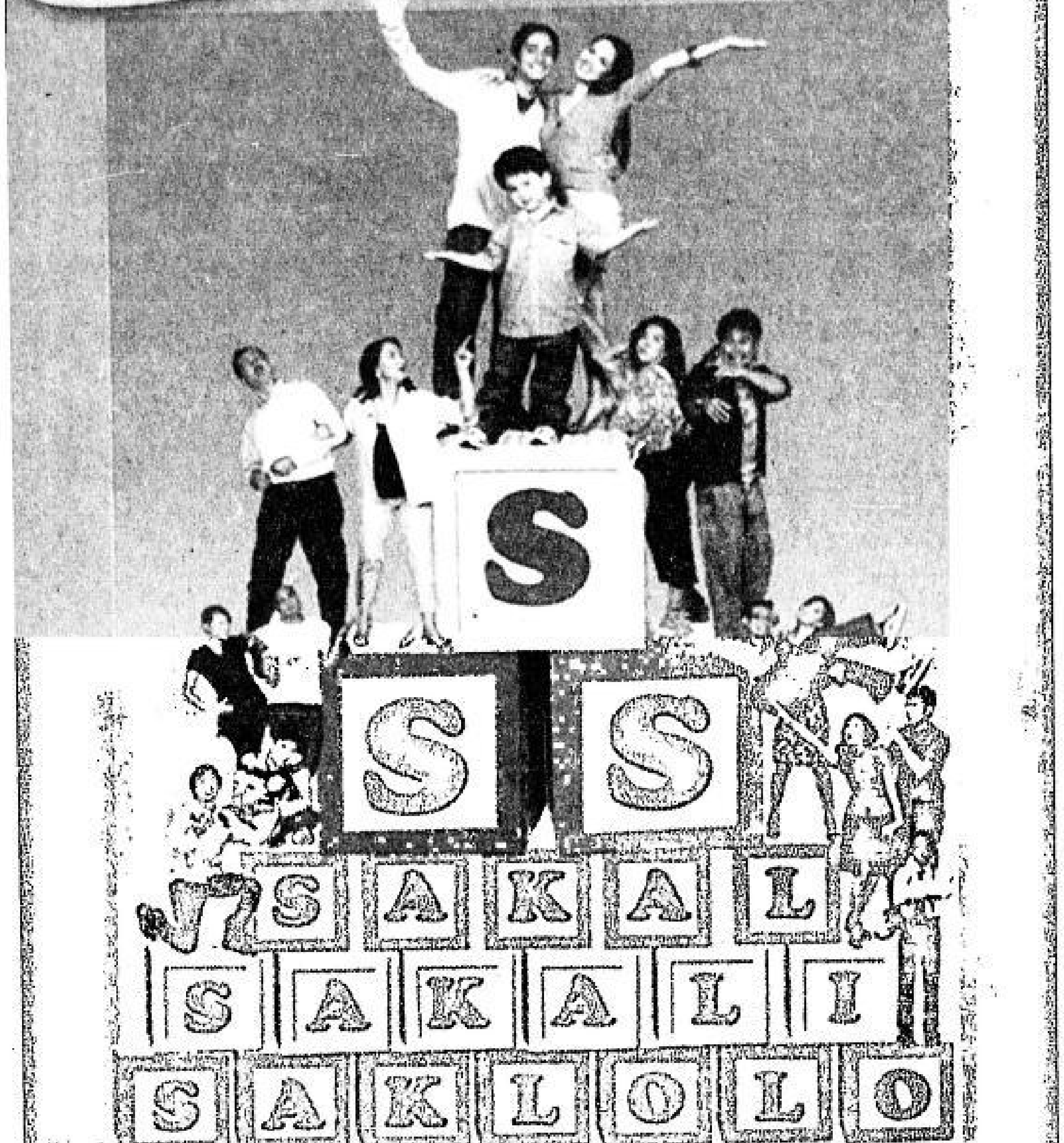

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DEATH PROOF 3:00 | 5:10 7:20 | 9:30

GOLDEN COMPASS 2:00 | 4:30 7:00 | 9:30

ELIZABETH 3:20 | 9:00

GOLDEN COMPASS 12:50 | 6:10

WALL TO WALL SCREEN DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

BEOWULF 2:25 | 7:05

ONE MORE CHANCE 12:45 | 3:40 6:35 | 9:30

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1. ELIZABETH
2. CATACOMBS
3. DEATH PROOF
4. BATANES
5. PASUKOB
6. SHIRI/ CARTOON NETWORK

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3. HITMAN
4. THE KINGDOM
5. PASUKOB
6. ELIZABETH
7. GOLDEN COMPASS
8. BATANES
9. DEATH PROOF
10. CATACOMBS
11. CARTOON NWTWORK
12. ONE MORE CHANCE

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1. ELIZABETH
2. BEOWULF
3. GOLDEN COMPASS
4. ONE MORE CHANCE
5. ENCHANTED
6. BATANES
7. CARTOON NETWORK
8. HITMAN
9. HOOD OF HORROR
10. PASUKOB
11. DEATH PROOF
12. CATACOMBS

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1. EASTERN PROMISES
2. ENCHANTED
3. PASUKOB
4. HITMAN
5. ONE MORE CHANCE
6. SHIRI
7. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
8. BATANES
9. BEOWULF
10. THE KINGDOM
11. DEATH PROOF
12. EASTERN PROMISES/ CARTOON NETWORK

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
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2. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3. PASUKOB
4. BATANES

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
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2. ELIZABETH
3. DEATH PROOF
4. CARTOON NETWORK/ PASUKOB
5. CATACOMBS
6. BATANES

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1. BATANES
2. DEATH PROOF
3. GOLDEN COMPASS
4. PASUKOB

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2. BATANES
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5. PASUKOB
6. DEATH PROOF
7. SHIRI
8. CATACOMBS
9. HOOD OF HORROR/ CARTOON NETWORK

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1. GOLDEN COMPASS
2. DEATH PROOF
3. ELIZABETH
4. PASUKOB
5. BATANES
6. BEOWULF
7. ONE MORE CHANCE
8. CARTOON NETWORK/ SHIRI
9. THE KINGDOM
10. EASTERN PROMISES

NOW OPEN
SM SUPERCENTER MUNTINLUPA 862 5693
1. BATANES
2. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3. ELIZABETH
4. PASUKOB

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240
1. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2. CATACOMBS
3. CARTOON NETWORK
4. BATANES
5. DEATH PROOF
6. ELIZABETH
7. ONE MORE CHANCE
8. THE KINGDOM
9. PASUKOB
10. BEOWULF
11. HITMAN
12. ENCHANTED

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917
1. GOLDEN COMPASS
2. BATANES
3. PASUKOB
4. RESERVED

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LUZON

SM CITY BACOOR (046)417-3868
1. HITMAN
2. ENCHANTED
3. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
4. ONE MORE CHANCE
5. BATANES
6. PASUKOB
7. SHIRI
8. EASTERN PROMISES

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17
1. GOLDEN COMPASS
2. PASUKOB
3. BATANES
4. HITMAN

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160
1. BATANES
2. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3. PASUKOB
4. ONE MORE CHANCE

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04
1. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2. THE GAME PLAN
3. PASUKOB
4. MR. MAGORIUM'S WONDER EMPORIUM

NOW OPEN
SM CITY TAYTAY 286-2502 to 04
1. PASUKOB
2. BATANES
3. GOLDEN COMPASS

SM CITY LIPA (043) 784-0187
1. MR. MAGORIUM'S WONDER EMPORIUM
2. THE GAMEPLAN
3. GOLDEN COMPASS
4. HITMAN

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85
1. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2. SHIRI/ CARTOON NETWORK
3. THE KINGDOM
4. VHAGETS
5. FRED CLAUSE/ BATANES
6. PASUKOB

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5340811
1. PASUKOB/ LIONS FOR LAMBS
2. THE GAMEPLAN
3. HITMAN
4. GOLDEN COMPASS

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
1. GOLDEN COMPASS
2. ONE MORE CHANCE
3. PASUKOB
4. LIONS FOR LAMBS

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39
1. HITMAN
2. SHIRI
3. THE GAME PLAN
4. GOLDEN COMPASS

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1. GOLDEN COMPASS
2. THE KINGDOM
3. THE GAMEPLAN
4. BOOGEYMAN 2
5. PASUKOB
6. FRED CLAUSE/ BATANES

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1. HITMAN
2. PASUKOB
3. GOLDEN COMPASS
4. THE GAMEPLAN

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998
1. HITMAN
2. THE GAMEPLAN
3. SHIRI/ CARTOON NETWORK
4. WEDDING DAZE
5. THE KINGDOM
6. GOLDEN COMPASS

SM CAGAYAN DE ORO (088)859-2884
1. THE KINGDOM
2. PASUKOB
3. 30 DAYS OF NIGHT
4. GOLDEN COMPASS

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422
1. NANNY DIARIES
2. RESERVED
3. SHIRI
4. GOLDEN COMPASS
5. HITMAN
6. THE GAMEPLAN
7. RESERVED
8. FRED CLAUSE

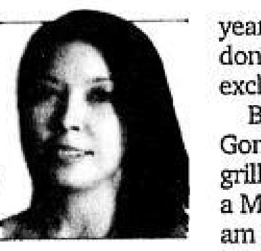
SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1. EASTERN PROMISES
2. FRED CLAUSE
3. GOLDEN COMPASS
4. THE GAMEPLAN
5. CARTOON NETWORK/ EL CANTANTE
6. VHAGETS
7. UNREST
8. SHIRI

SM CITY BACOLOD (034) 700 1010
1. HITMAN
2. THE KINGDOM
3. MR. MAGORIUM'S WONDER EMPORIUM
4. THE GOLDEN COMPASS

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

'FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

DJ Mo denies KBP suspension



DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

DJ MO NIXES RUMORS THAT the KBP (Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas) will suspend him because of his daring interview with Sen. **Chiz Escudero.** "From what I know, it's not true," he clarifies. "Chiz on my radio show was a very positive guesting. It gave the listeners an open forum that made them learn more about their elected senator. Anyone who thinks I should be suspended for that needs to either listen to a tape of the show or they should get a bit more open-minded about media affairs. I'm sure a hypocrite started the *chismis.*"

With all the controversies DJ Mo has gotten thrust into, he has now perfected his sense of RUMOR.

After 'Marimar'

A STUDIO insider told me that **Marian Rivera**'s next project after "Marimar," which ends in mid March, will most likely be "Rosalinda" or "Darna" and not "Dyesebel." The Kapuso network's newest superstar ought to be called "Merry Mar(ian)."

No big deal

LUCY Torres-Gomez says that she and **Richard** are not big on giving each other Christmas gifts. "We constantly surprise each other all year round," she beams. "So we don't have to wait for Christmas to exchange presents."

But for her birthday (Dec. 11), Goma gave her three books—on grilled cheeses, about paninis and a Mac Book Pro. "That's because I am into sandwiches now and I love using our press grill," she explains. "I use my Mac to keep files so that my life is organized (laughs)." That's one charmed life Lucy's got!

Homemade gifts

IF there's one celebrity whom **Dingdong Dantes** wants to give a Christmas gift to, it's **Sharon Cuneta.** "Lately Sha has been so kind to me," he says. "So I want to make her try the pizza I make and the beer I brew myself."

Isn't it amazing that someone as busy as Dong still finds time for homemade stuff? Fame has not made him lose sight of the simple joys in life. That's what sets Dong apart from the rest.

Yuletide babies

ABS-CBN Star Magic really knows how to pamper their wards. They threw a party cum press con for their December "babies": **Yeng Constantino, Jake Cuenca, Rico Barrera, Bruce Quebral, Aaron Junatas, Kristel Fulgar, Dionne Monsanto, Jessy Mendiola, Mika dela Cruz, Lui Villaruz, Johanna Villeta, Puma de Borja, Yong An Chiu, Carlos Agassi, Juiljo Psik, Joshua Dionisio, Michelle Murenec and Tim Espinosa.** Among all of them, Jake's star shines the brightest but with all the projects lined up for the rest, they will surely make their mark soon. Speaking of Jake, he adamantly denies that he has split up with **Roxanne Guinoo** due to her unreasonable jealousy attacks. Guess he still "Jakes" her day in spite of all the rumors hounding them.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

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THE DIRECTOR OF 'KILL BILL'
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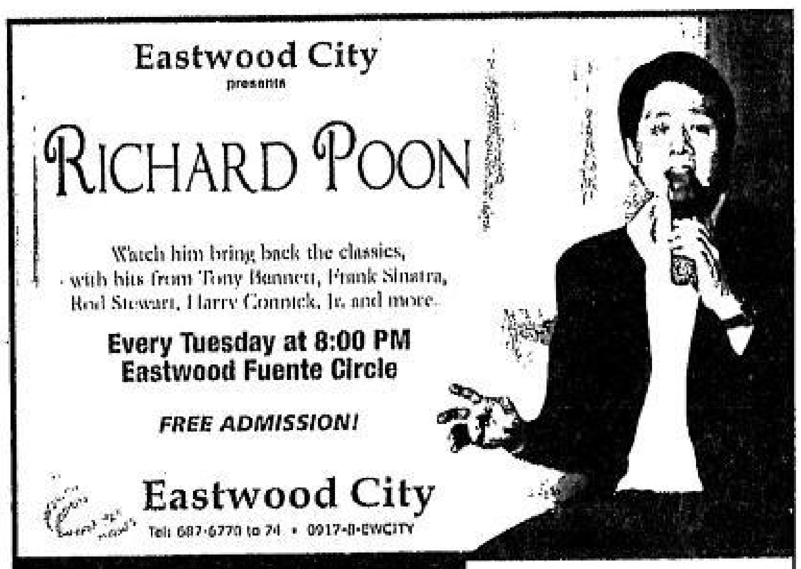
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687-6963
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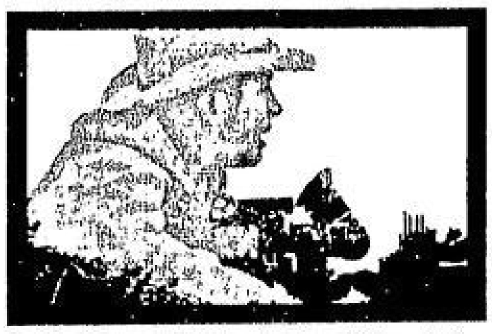
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	ENCHANTED	2:35, 5:15, 7:55, 10:35	G
2	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2:40, 5:20, 8:00, 10:35	PG-13
3	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	2:00, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30	PG-13
4	THE KINGDOM	3:20, 8:05	R-13
	GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF	5:40,10:30	R-13

The National Commission for Culture and the Arts
in cooperation with
Embajada de Mexico Manila, Filipinas and Mowelfund Film Institute
Invites Filmmakers to join a 4-day
MEXICAN FILM WORKSHOP
(December 18-21, 2007)
with Gustavo Loza
(Director, *Al otro lado / The Other Side*)



Deadline for submission of application form/CV and interview is on Dec. 10, 2007.
Limited Participation:
Open to Filmmakers who have done two or more films
Mowelfund Plaza
no. 66 Rosario Drive corner Ilang-Ilang St.,
Cubao, Quezon City
telefax: 410 1467 / 410 4545
For inquiry, call 727 1915 loc. 122 and look for Gie
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AT THE CINEMAS
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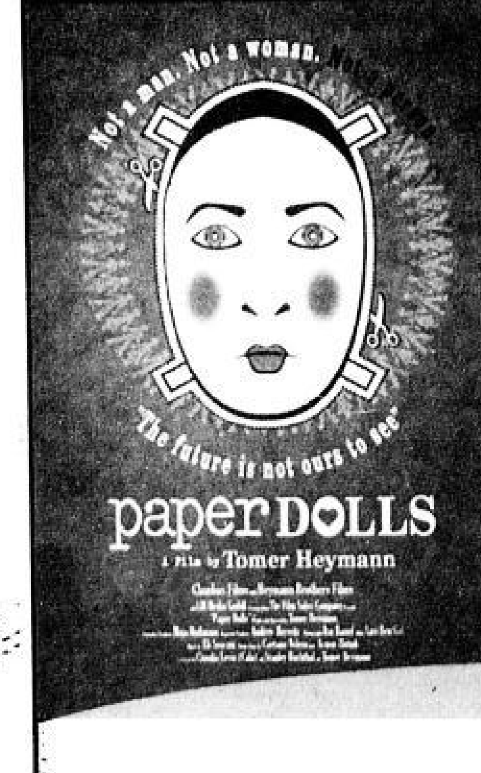
Reserve your tickets by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.
Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 729-7777

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
GLORIETTA 1	CATACOMB	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	HOOD OF HORROR	HITMAN			
GLORIETTA 4	ENCHANTED	THE KINGDOM	THX ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS	GONE BABY GONE	BATANES	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	DEATH PROOF
GREENBELT 1	PAPER DOLLS	THE GOLDEN COMPASS					
GREENBELT 3	THX THE GOLDEN COMPASS GUARANTEED SEATS	THX ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS	DEATH PROOF GUARANTEED SEATS	GONE BABY GONE GUARANTEED SEATS	EASTERN PROMISES GUARANTEED SEATS		
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX THE GOLDEN COMPASS	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN COMPASS	DEATH PROOF	CATACOMB	THE KINGDOM		
AYALA CENTER CEBU	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	THE GAME PLAN	FRED CLAUS	EASTERN PROMISES			
MARKET! MARKET!	THE GOLDEN COMPASS	DEATH PROOF	HOOD OF HORROR	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	CATACOMB		
TRINOMA • THX Certified • All-Digital Sound • All-Stadium Seating • Computerized Ticketing System • Recliner Seats	BATANES	DEATH PROOF	ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS	HOOD OF HORROR GUARANTEED SEATS	ENCHANTED	CATACOMB	THX THE GOLDEN COMPASS GUARANTEED SEATS

AT THE MALLS
Ayala Malls
CONCIERGE HOTLINE NUMBERS:
Glorietta - 752 7272
Greenbelt - 757 4853 to 54
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; 772 1860
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc. 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519
TriNoma - 901 3000

glorietta	Urban Beats featuring Stonefree and Cambio December 17; 6pm; Glorietta 4 Park
GREENBELT	Holiday Opera Concert December 21; 7pm; Greenbelt 3 Park
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	Christian Bautista Live! December 22; 6pm; Town Plaza
AYALA CENTER CEBU	Christmas Chorale featuring Akafellas December 22; 7pm; Activity Center
MARKET! MARKET!	Christmas Shoes: A Christmas Musicale December 17; 7pm; Activity Center
Greenbelt Onstage	Repertory Philippines presents TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE January 11 to 27, 2007 For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710 or visit www.repertory-philippines.com
Ayala MUSEUM	WATER: THE MEDIUM by Juvenal Sanso November 24 to January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery For more info, pls. call 757-7117 to 21 loc. 14 or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org
TriNoma	Taylor Hicks Live! December 20; 7pm; Activity Center FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P500 worth of purchase. See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-938, Series of 2007 December 1 to 31



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presents
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Portion of the proceeds will go to Sally Camatoy family.
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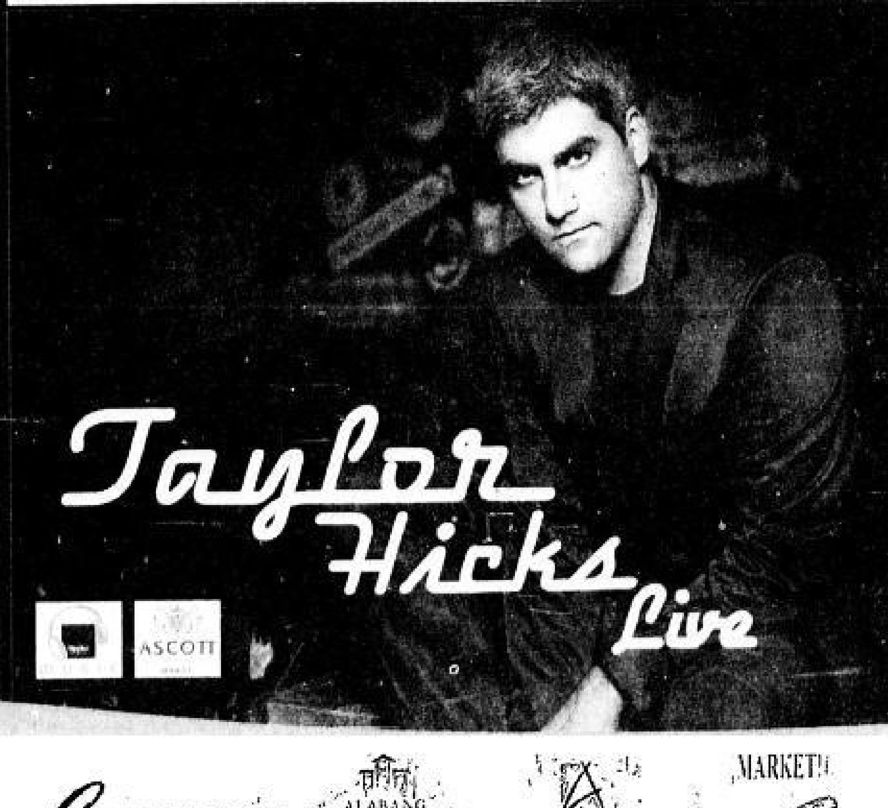

Glorietta
December 18, 2007
Glorietta 4 Park
7:00pm
Concierge hotline: 752.7272

Greenbelt
December 19, 2007
Greenbelt 3 Park
8:00pm
Concierge hotline: 757.4853

TriNoma
December 20, 2007
Activity Center
7:00pm
Concierge hotline: 901.3000

Meet & Greet
after each show

glorietta GREENBELT ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU MARKET! MARKET! TriNoma